The Stabbing of George Harry Storrs

Jonathan Goodman

$15.00

THE STABBING OF GEORGE HARRY STORRS

BY JONATHAN GOODMAN

OCTOBER OF 1910 WAS A VINTAGE MONTH FOR murder trials in England. On Saturday, the twenty-second, after a five-day trial at the Old Bailey in London, the expatriate American doctor Hawley Harvey Crippen was found guilty of poisoning his wife Cora, who was best known by her stage name of Belle Elmore. And on the following Monday, Mark Wilde entered the dock in Court Number One at Chester Castle to stand trial for the stabbing of George Harry Storrs. He was the second person to be tried for the murder—the first, Cornelius Howard, a cousin of the victim, having earlier been found not guilty.

The "Gorse Hall mystery," as it became known from its mise-en-scène, the stately residence of the murdered man near the town of Stalybridge in Cheshire, was at that time almost twelve months old; and it had captured the imagination of the British public since the morning of November 2, 1909, when, according to one reporter, "the whole country was thrilled with the news of the outrage." Though Storrs, a wealthy mill-owner, had only a few weeks before erected a massive alarm bell on the roof of Gorse Hall after telling the police of an attempt on his life, it did not save him from being stabbed to death by a mysterious intruder. Storrs died of multiple wounds without revealing anything about his attacker, though it was the impression of *[Continued on back flap]*

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Ohio State University Press
Columbus

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Goodman, Jonathan.
The stabbing of George Harry Storrs.

Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
1. Murder—England—Stalybridge (Greater Manchester).
2. Storrs, George Harry. I. Title.
HV6535.G6S724 1983 364.1'523'0942735 83–8267
ISBN 0–8142–0349–3

For K
(Mrs. Robert F. Hussey)
with love

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PREFACE

JACQUES BARZUN

Readers who refuse to turn to crime, whether in its fictional or historical form, generally give a strong reason for their aversion, and it is a reason not about themselves but about the fallen creatures who do enjoy those literary genres. The partakers are supposed to be athirst for crude sensations; they resemble the ugly mobs that storm the doors of the court at murder trials and secretly regret that capital executions are no longer public. To dissociate oneself from such as these seems natural enough.

But like most moral imputations, this one is arbitrary and ill-founded. The connoisseurs of crime are for the most part people of sensibilities as delicate as the abstainers', and perhaps they have stronger minds. They relish the varieties of human behavior, which is why they go to literature in addition to observing life. And in literature they find, among other types, tragedy, crime fiction, and what has come to be called "true crime."

The appeal of this last-named species of composition is manifold. It presents ordinary human beings under stress: not just the principals, but a hitherto unconnected score of persons suddenly caught in the searchlight of a police investigation. They are buffeted and bruised by newspaper reports and repeated grilling in and out of court; their earlier doings, their secrets, their abilities and pretensions, are made into a public show. It is a grim novel in action, a novel in the mode of Dickens and Dostoevsky, who in fact drew upon just such live materials for their most renowned effects.

The art needed to make a famous murder case intelligible and true is not the common property of all professional

writers. Some excellent hands at crime fiction have fumbled when they attempted actual history. Indeed, one may distinguish three forms of the "true" genre, each of which draws on special abilities. The first is the long essay, fifty to seventy-five pages long, which recounts in the manner of a storyteller—summarizing, commenting, judging in a kind of monologue. William Roughead showed his mastery of this form in the dozen or so volumes he published between 1913 and 1941. Henry James was one of his early and avid readers.

At the opposite extreme—and here again Roughead displayed his craft—is the full-blown report of a trial, as in the well-known *Notable British Trials* and similar series. In such works, large portions of the courtroom testimony are reproduced verbatim, with commentary and explanations of character and event as needed. The skill here is editorial and aimed at fashioning as complete a record of the case as can be given in portable form. It is the next thing to the combined police files, court transcripts, and newspaper reports weighing half a ton. The great English historian Maitland declared that to compare successive ages he would choose to witness (or study) famous murder trials.

In between the essay and the trial stands the kind of work Mr. Goodman furnishes in the present book. It offers an account of a crime that he himself has investigated retrospectively, almost three-quarters of a century after the event. His narrative is much richer in detail than an essay could be, but it does not include the day-by-day progress of the trial. In the instant case this would mean tedious repetition, since two men were tried, one after the other, for the murder of George Harry Storrs. But the presence of two suspects certainly adds to the suspense, the bewilderment, the social and psychological interest of the extraordinary sequence of events.

The outline of the Gorse Hall case has long been known to criminologists and their lay counterparts. But not until Mr. Goodman showed us the fruits of his amazingly pertinacious and minute inquiries could we see with any sharpness of vision the dramatis personae, their habits and foibles, the places they frequented, and their dubious or likely relation to

the still incomprehensible menace which ended the life of the Stalybridge tycoon on 1 November 1909.

The first surprise one receives from the author's vividly written and beautifully composed narrative is how much is known about the souls and deeds of unimportant people and how much survives in the memory of their contemporaries. But it takes a kind of genius to recover all this lore; compared with the feat, the boasted retrieval that a computer performs is dull routine, for in fact it has no memory and knows nothing.

Next, the view of human life that one is left with after the recital of such a complex crime is that irrationality prevails—not in the sense of the passions unrestrained, but in the sense that silly, stupid, mad, inexplicable words and acts form the web of ordinary experience. That is why in any mystery like the one here related the loose ends are many and remain forever untied.

But those features do not mean that reason cannot satisfy itself about the main facts and motives. Human behavior is simultaneously mysterious and comprehensible, and it is the great virtue of such writers as Mr. Goodman to extend the scope of our understanding, thanks to their own curiosity and love of the rational. In two previous works, *The Killing of Julia Wallace* and *The Burning of Evelyn Foster,* our author was able to discover, in the one, the identity of the murderer, in the other, the exact concatenation of events, while also removing from both cases that accretion of falsehoods, big and small, which tradition and lesser writers perpetuate.

Whether one agrees or not with Mr. Goodman's speculation about the cause of the Storrs murder and the culprit, every reader must acknowledge that all the evidence about each of the three candidates for that office has been marshalled with superlative skill and absolute fairness. It is this triple power of search, analysis, and reconstruction that makes Jonathan Goodman the direct heir of Roughead as the greatest living master of the true-crime literature.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Apart from nearly two hundred letters I have needed to write and a hundred or so telephone calls I have had to make, the search for information relating to the Gorse Hall case has taken me to many places in England: several times to Stalybridge and the towns around, of course; to Chester, Knutsford, and Tarporley; to Huddersfield, Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Oldham, Sheffield, and Southport; to Colwyn Bay; to Cirencester; to the villages of Kents Bank and Kirkby Stephen in Cumbria, and Silverdale in Lancashire. And, closer to home, I have scoured registers and files in government buildings in London.

A lot of people have helped me, but two in particular: Philip Chadwick, a prosecuting solicitor who is a native of Ashton-under-Lyne, and Eileen Wood, a busily inquiring member of the Stalybridge Historical Society.

Others I want to thank are:

Dr. Ian Appleby and Richard Appleby (nephews of the late Mrs. Marion Appleby, née Lindley), Thomas Entwhistle Storrs (son of the late James Storrs), and Stuart Underwood (grandson of the late James Storrs)—especial thanks to him.

People of Stalybridge and district: Miss Edith Brocklehurst, A. Brownhill, A. Charlesworth, Mrs. Dorothy Chatterton, Mrs. Doris Cheetham, Miss Margaret Connolly, Walter Flint, Mrs. Maud Maes, Mrs. Margaret Preece, Mrs. Lizzie Sidebottom, T. Tomlinson, Mrs. Joan Wardley, Graham Whitehead.

People of Silverdale and Kents Bank: Tom Bolton, Tom Bright, Harvey Burrow, the Reverend Noel Coleman, John Mason, David Peter, Mrs. Elsie Williams.

People of Knutsford: the late Arthur Gautrey, assistant editor of the *Journal of the Knutsford Historical and Archeological*

Association, the Reverend Will Strachan, Mrs. Pamela Strong, Eric Yeomans, the town clerk.

Chief Inspector Barbara Sim-Mutch and Police Constable Ivor Lewis of the Cheshire Constabulary.

Alan Baker of the Oldham Borough solicitor's staff; A.O. Burgess, senior administrative assistant, South Tameside Magistrates' Court; His Honour Judge Elam; Winston Gordon, clerk to the justices, South Tameside Petty Sessional Division; S.J. Gullick, secretary of the North Eastern Circuit; Glyn Hardwicke; Alan Kay, clerk to the Huddersfield justices; E. Parsons of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; Ellis Pollitt, clerk to the Oldham justices; Derek Sinkinson, Crown Court administrator, Oldham; Sir Norman J. Skelhorn, QC; Mrs. M. Young of the Law Society.

W. A. Cowie, chief engineer, Harrogate Borough Council; Mrs. N. A. Langley of the Electoral Registration Office, Harrogate; Kenneth Lowick of the Administration Department, Tameside Metropolitan Borough; Alan F. Winstanley, secretary of the South Lakeland District Council.

Mrs. Pat Turner of the Prison Department of the Home Office, and E. Callaghan, Governor IV, Strangeways Prison, Manchester.

Miss Alice Lock and Miss Alison Yates of the Tameside Local Studies Library (especial thanks to them); W. W. S. Bream, librarian and keeper of manuscripts of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple; J. W. Carter, director of libraries, art galleries, and museums, Oldham Metropolitan Borough; George Fisher of the Lancashire Records Office; Robert Frost, deputy county archivist, West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council; Brian Hill, Lancashire County Council archivist; Miss Annette Kennett, Chester City archivist; Miss E. McNeill, librarian and keeper of the records of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple; Keith McVeigh, law librarian, Manchester University; Ms. Susan Matthews of the Local History Department of Manchester Public Libraries; Miss Eileen Simpson, assistant to the Cheshire County archivist; A. G. Veysey, Clwyd County archivist; R. Walker, librarian of Lincoln's Inn; Miss Arabella Wood, librarian of the Department of Education and Science.

The librarians and staffs of the British Museum Newspaper Library, the Catholic Central Library, the Marylebone Medical Library, and the public libraries of Colwyn Bay, Ealing, Southport, and Westminster.

Peter Cotes; J. H. H. Gaute; Jane Gore of Bell Books Ltd.; Jack Hammond (the leading dealer specializing in antiquarian and secondhand books on crime history and criminology in the United Kingdom); Miss Joan Miller; Robin Odell; Brian Schwartz; Patterson Smith (the leading dealer specializing in antiquarian and secondhand books on crime history and criminology in the United States of America).

Mrs. B. Brown of the *Huddersfield Examiner*; Alf Richards of *Sporting Life*; John Stephens, press officer of the Department of the Environment.

B. Atkinson of St. John's College, Oxford; George Bevan of the British Rail Board; Josef Doswald of the Swiss Embassy in London; Beryl M. Evans of the National Meteorological Office; Gerry Griver of Marlborough House; R. J. Kirby of Post Office Telecommunications, Manchester; Ms. Anne Neal of the staff of Buckingham Palace; Mrs. E. Ridley of Wilsons Brewery Ltd.; Martin Taylor of the National Federation of Building Trades Employers; Ms. Virginia Tendy of the Astley Cheetham Art Gallery; John Weir of the Glass and Glazing Federation. The head of Zivilstandsamt, Stadt Schaffhausen, Switzerland.

Last of all, and for the umpteenth time, my thanks go to Richard and Molly Whittington-Egan, who did all sorts of jobs, asked a lot of awkward questions, and encouraged me even when I didn't need to be.

Ealing Village, London
1982

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

IN ALL BUT A FEW MURDER CASES, THE CRIME COMES as a complete surprise to the victim: confident of dying naturally, he has made no effort to prevent the criminal quietus, has not augmented any preparation for a possible meeting with his Maker. In the Gorse Hall case, however, the victim, a man called George Harry Storrs, seems to have been warned of the fatal attack and to have taken some notice of the warning. *Seems* is the salient word. If we are to come anywhere near solving the mystery, we must concentrate on getting rid of the ambiguity.

> Aw've often yerd grand accounts
> O' places up and deawn,
> So aw thowt ut aw'd say summat
> Abeawt my native town.
> Yo' might ha' seen Killarney's lakes,
> Or climbed owd Snowdon's ridge;
> But aw'll bet yo' never see'd a place
> Fur't equal Stalybridge.
>
> *Samuel Hill (1864-1909)*

Think first of the river, which is the town's reason for being. Called the Tame, and alluded to as the "parent of the Mersey," it starts in the Pennines, the "knobbly backbone of England," and tumbles south until, faced by Hough Hill (about which we shall hear more), it makes an abrupt right turn and at once bisects Stalybridge, lying in a valley just within Cheshire, against the southern boundary of Lancashire. The "Staly" part of the name is a shortening of Staley, which derives from Staveley, probably meaning a place where staves were gathered.

In 1776, a man called Neddy Hall built a cotton mill in Staley, then no more than a village; it was not only the first mill in the district but the first in the northwest of England. Twenty years later, with the advent of the steam engine, Neddy Hall erected a tall chimney as a smoke shaft, and the mill became known as the "soot-poke"; locally, this name became generic for all the mills—about two dozen of them—that were built during the next century, the smoke from their chimneys forming a foggy cloud and dropping a drizzle of smuts.

It was the river that attracted the cotton-makers: they required plenty of water—if not from a river itself, then from canals leading from one or from small reservoirs known as mill-lodges. Most of the mills were of similar aspect and design: built of red brick (the palatial ones of brilliant "Accrington red"), they had four or five stories, each devoted to a stage of cotton-spinning, and at the sides were towers, with the name of the mill picked out in white glazed brick, that housed the water tanks.

Stalybridge quickly grew into a small town; and so did nearby Hyde (to the south), Dukinfield (straggling from the west to the south) and Ashton-under-Lyne (to the northwest), the four towns coalescing until it was hard to discern where one ended and another began.

The growth of Stalybridge was noticed by Benjamin Disraeli, the future prime minister, who in the late 1840s wrote the novel *Coningsby*. The eponymous hero, soon after leaving Eton, pays a visit to Manchester, and is mightily impressed by the signs of the industrial revolution. One evening in his hotel, in casual conversation with a businessman, he describes Manchester as the most wonderful city in the world, but is contradicted by the man, who says that, as far as machinery is concerned, Manchester is behind the times, "a dead letter." "If you want to see life," the man continues, "go to Stalybridge or Bolton. There's high pressure." Later, Coningsby learns that the man is one of Stalybridge's cotton lords.

The progress of the town was brought to a halt when the American Civil War caused the supply of cotton from the plantations of the South almost to peter out; many businesses

closed down and most of the rest went on short time; by 1863, when the total population was about 25,000, there were 7,000 unemployed, and nearly three-quarters of the inhabitants were more or less dependent on charity. Samuel Laycock, the Stalybridge laureate (1826–93), wrote:

> Oh, dear! iv yon Yankees could only just see
> Heaw they're clemmin'[1] and starvin' poor weavers loike me,
> Aw think they'd soon settle their bother, an' strive
> To send us some cotton to keep us alive.[2]

With the end of the Civil War, prosperity returned—*of a sort* as far as the workpeople were concerned, for they received pathetically small recompense for an eleven- or twelve-hour day in the mills. There was little to look forward to. Oddly, the red-letter day each year was Whit *Friday*, when everyone put on his Sunday best (in many cases, this just meant wearing boots instead of clogs) to join or watch the processions of church and chapel congregations, each led by a brass band, to the marketplace, where hymns were sung, prayers said, and a speech made by the mayor and listened to by some; in the afternoon there were bun-parties in the church and chapel halls, and games were organized for the children in and around the unexpectedly splendid Stamford Park; the day ended with a band contest near the town hall (a triangular building, the entrance at the sharp end, which was designed in that shape to match a triangular piece of land that had been donated to the town). Every year, from the first Sunday after 17 July, most manufacturing firms in the district closed down for the Wakes holiday week: then the temporarily affluent members of the community traveled to the seaside, and the stay-at-homes, by far the majority, rambled and picnicked on Hough Hill, attended special matinees at the Hippodrome in the street facing the market, went to the visiting fair, or (particularly in the early years) watched cockfights or bull-

1. Clem: to pinch as hunger does. (Oxford English Dictionary)

2. Readers interested in nationalistic crime figures may be intrigued by the fact that in 1863, the year of "bread riots," of the 360 persons apprehended, 146 were English, 212 Irish, one Welsh, and one Scots.

Fig. 1. View of Stalybridge from below Gorse Hall. Courtesy of Tameside Libraries and Arts Collections.

baiting. Some simply spent the week, and their wages, pub-crawling. The town was well-endowed with licensed premises—more than fifty of them by the end of the nineteenth century, ranging from the Frozen Mop to the Steam Engine, from Kitty Grimes' to the Wellington; and as a small claim to fame, Stalybridge had both the Thirteenth Mounted Cheshire Rifleman Inn, the pub with the longest name in the country, and the plain Q, which must have had the shortest.

Crimes associated with drink, few of them at all serious, caused a disproportionate amount of the work of the Stalybridge Borough Police Force, formed in 1857 and by 1909 comprising a chief constable, two inspectors, five sergeants, one detective-sergeant, twenty-three constables, and one constable whose wages were paid by a local firm. Every so often, the force was called upon to preserve law and order when there was a strike or a disturbance at a mill, usually in the cause of raising wages. Industrial unrest was often exacerbated by outside agitators, or "firebrands," whose soapbox oratory had as its nub the contrast between the earnings of the workers and the profits of the cotton lords; once trouble had begun, the owners themselves sometimes turned to outsiders in the form of professional strikebreakers.

If only in terms of continuity, three members of the Leech family, all named John, were among the foremost cotton lords of Stalybridge. About 1795, when only twenty years of age, the first of them went into partnership with three other men to erect a mill. The building was gutted by fire ten years later, and John Leech bought some land in Grosvenor Street, the main thoroughfare on the south side of the town, and set up a mill of his own. He prospered; but not half as much as did his son, who at the age of twenty-one took over the firm when his father died in 1822, and soon acquired the nickname of "Ready-Money Jack" because of the succession of ventures he undertook.

One of these was the replacement of the original mill. At that time, the conventional architectural wisdom was to build mills of five stories, and Leech accepted this when he saw the plans; but when the fifth floor was almost completed, he decided to add a sixth; and before this was finished, he

ordered it to be topped by another. Asked why he had put on the extra stories, he replied: "There's no ground rent to pay up there."

There seems to have been at least a touch of paternalism in Leech's associated project of building houses for his workers on a large, rectangular plot of land adjoining the mill: an urban version of farmers' tied cottages. As soon as a tenant left Leech's employ, he had to find somewhere else to live, so the houses both reduced the urge to seek other work and provoked second thoughts before joining in strikes, which could mean the sack. So as to use every inch of the land, the diminutive dwellings—"two-up, two-down" and mostly back-to-back—were laid out in a grid pattern of four-sided closes, the houses in each close facing a tiny courtyard, access to which was through a narrow entry, or "ginnel." Neither the cramped conditions in the houses nor the way they were packed together was conductive to hygiene, and before many years had passed the area was infested with "black-jacks" (cockroaches).

Another of Leech's ventures was the establishment of a shipbuilding yard at Bideford in Devon. (Goodness knows why he chose this location, which is almost as far as one can go from Stalybridge and still remain in England.) With Liverpool as their home port, clippers built at the yard took goods made at the Grosvenor Street Mill to the East Indies, and returned not only with raw cotton but with tea, rice, and other merchandise that Leech sold to the highest bidders.

In 1835 his wife gave birth to their first son, who, to save confusion, became known as "Young John" (and who, though he took charge of the business after his father's death, need not detain us).

In the same year, Leech purchased the wooded estate of some forty-five acres that formed the southern side of Grosvenor Street, rising up the side of Hough Hill to a height of 250 feet above the town and continuing along the top. The entrance, with an imposing gate and a lodge, was in Albert Square, at the western end of the street. The land had once been prickled with gorse, and this had given the name—Gorse Hall—to an L-shaped house near the brow of the hill.

Fig. 2. Gorse Hall. Courtesy of Tameside Libraries and Arts Collections.

Fig. 3. Old Gorse Hall. Courtesy of Tameside Libraries and Arts Collections.

No one was sure when the house had been built, but it was there in 1621, when the owner instructed in his will: "My son . . . to have one bed and the furniture thereunto belonging standing in my chamber at my house called Gorses." There was also a building—from the outside, a cross between a bijou castle and a nonconformist church—on Lyne Edge, behind the Hall; called Hunter's Tower, it had been constructed at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the local squire, ostensibly as a meeting-place for the hunt but perhaps actually as a venue for orgiastic fun and games—hinted at in a report of its opening which says that, because of a storm, the "grand meet" that had been arranged was put off and the day "devoted to . . . offerings at the shrines of Apollo and Bacchus." The estate was pocked by disused quarries, and there was a small lake that, long after Leech bought the property, was given the name of the "blue lagoon."

Using blocks of gray millstone-grit from one of the quarries, Leech built a house about two hundred yards from, and on a slightly higher elevation than, the Hall. It was imposing but unattractive, its sole concessions to aesthetics being a layered canopy, supported by square pillars, over the front door, and a half-circular bay in the center of one of the side walls. The best thing about the house was its view. Looking away from Stalybridge, which more often than not was hidden by smoke, the Saddleworth Hills and the more distant Derbyshire Peaks could be seen.

Chiefly to accommodate the horses that drew his two broughams, but also as a home for his hunters, Leech built stables, with domestic premises above them for a groom, on a shelf of land farther down the hill. There were already plenty of trees around the house, but he planted more, including fruit trees to make an orchard, and he flanked the long, winding drive from Albert Square with rhododendrons. Before he bought the estate, some of his workers used it as a shortcut to the mill, walking diagonally down the hill from their homes in Dukinfield and Hyde. So that they could continue to do so but without trespassing on his land, he excavated a tunnel beneath the drive: though it was unlit,

dank, and barely wide enough for two people walking side by side, the workers were grateful for the amenity.

With one extraordinary exception, to be mentioned in a moment, the members of the Leech line were unimaginative name-givers: the first sons were invariably christened John; the founder of the family fortunes simply called his mill after the street in which it stood; "Ready-Money Jack" named the flagship of his fleet of clippers the *Jane Leech* after his wife—and instead of thinking up a name for his new home, called it Gorse Hall, leaving the original one to become known as *Old* Gorse Hall.

He died in 1861, but his wife lived on—and at Gorse Hall—for another twenty-three years. Of their several children, three married and had children of their own.

One of the granddaughters was Beatrix Potter, the creator of, among other furry and feathered characters, Squirrel Nutkin, Miss Tiggy-winkle, and Jemima Puddleduck. As a child she lived in London, but she was sometimes taken to stay with her grandmother. After Jane Leech's death in March 1884 (when Beatrix Potter was seventeen), she decided to go to Gorse Hall one last time, and wrote in her coded journal (28 March):

> . . . It is the last chance of seeing the old house. Not that I look forward to that as an unmixed pleasure.
>
> I have a very pleasant recollection of it, which I fear may be changed. I have now seen longer passages and higher halls. The rooms will look cold and empty, the passage I used to patter along on the way to bed will no longer seem dark and mysterious; and, above all, the kind voice which cheered the house is silent for ever.
>
> It is six or seven years since I have been there, but I remember it like yesterday. The pattern of the door-mat, the pictures on the old music-box, the sound of the rocking-horse as it swung, the engravings on the stair, the smell of the Indian corn and feeling on plunging one's hands into the bin, the hooting of the turkeys and the quick flutter of the fantails' wings. I would not have it changed.

She went to Gorse Hall on 2 April, and afterward wrote:

> . . . A painful and dreary visit. My first feeling on entering the

> door was regret that I had come. How small the hall had grown, there was a new door-mat—but in a minute or two it had come back. It was the same old place, the same quiet light and the same smell. . . .

Gorse Hall stayed empty until 1891, when it was occupied by George Harry Storrs.

He was one of the three sons[3] of William Storrs, a native of Sheffield, on the Yorkshire side of the Pennines, whose parents, George and Susannah, migrated to Stalybridge when he was just past the toddling stage. After being apprenticed to a carpenter, William worked for a couple of years as a journeyman, but at the age of twenty-three (that was in 1851) set up a one-man-and-a-laborer building firm. In no time at all, he created a decent business, and by the 1860s was carrying out contracts all over the north of England, tackling just about anything from the erection of a cotton mill to the restoration of a cathedral; in Stalybridge itself, he built the hospital and the Victoria Market. He acquired large financial interests in other firms, including two mills, and was made chairman of the Red R Steamship Company of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, one of whose vessels was named after him. In 1872, learning that the owners of the large Aqueduct Mill had severe money troubles, he bought them out, and turned some of the offices at the mill into his firm's headquarters. He managed to find time for civic work, and became a town councillor and, later, a magistrate for the County of Cheshire. A man with what were known as "broad views" of religion, he acted as a trustee for some of the property owned by the Anglican church of Saint Paul's. Soon after his marriage, he built a house for himself: Fern Bank, a many-roomed, utilitarian structure of dark-gray stone in Mottram Road, which ran southeast from Stalybridge, roughly parallel with the eastern boundary of the Gorse Hall estate.

His sons were a diverse trio. We shall deal with the youn-

3. To be strictly accurate, there were four: the fourth son, Edwin, died when only ten months old.

gest first: his name was William Henry, and he was born in 1865. As far as one can make out, he never did a stroke of work in his life. He remained a bachelor, though it appears that on several occasions he came close to being forced to make an honest woman of a current lady friend. Even by the bibulous standards of the time, he was a heavy drinker. But in the parable sense, he was truly the prodigal son, for his parents doted on him. After the death of his mother, Sarah, in 1900 (his father had died seven years before), he inherited Fern Bank. He did not enjoy the bequest for long, however, as he died—of drink, so it's said—at the age of thirty-seven.

William Henry's inheritance of the house made his eldest brother, James, furious. James—who was born in 1856 and grew to a height of six foot three and a half inches, thus gaining the nickname of "Big Jim"—was more than adequately fertile: he had nine children (a tenth died when still a baby) by his first wife, Alice, a former mill girl who died in 1901, and one more by Amy, a schoolmistress with a family connection with a large boiler-making firm, whom he married two years later. His overpopulated house in Cheetham Hill Road, on the Dukinfield side of the town, was small compared with Fern Bank. He felt that he should have been left the family home, and he moved into it just a few weeks after William Henry's body was interred at Saint Paul's.

Though James was a director of William Storrs Sons & Company and owned a third of the shares after his father's death (half of them when William Henry died), he devoted precious little time to the company. He was a great one for civic duties. A Liberal alderman for the Lancashire ward of the town, he served on the finance, education, highway, market, watch, sanitary, gasworks, library, and parliamentary committees; no doubt he would have served on more if there had been any. (One cannot help wondering, of course, whether there was an ulterior motive for his almost full-time council work: then as now, some people in the building trade looked upon local government service in terms of commercial perks rather than social responsibility; all one can say is that William Storrs Sons & Company did not go short of council contracts.) When James was not at the town hall, he was often

in London or Manchester, fulfilling commitments associated with his membership of the council of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers.

James looked every inch of his seventy-five and a half inches a man of power. His tailcoat was impeccably fitted; his dark wavy hair, which by 1909 was heavily streaked with gray, was kept suave by brilliantine, and his vandyke beard was a miracle of symmetry; he was rarely seen without a cigar (a child saw him in the street, and noted—and long afterward

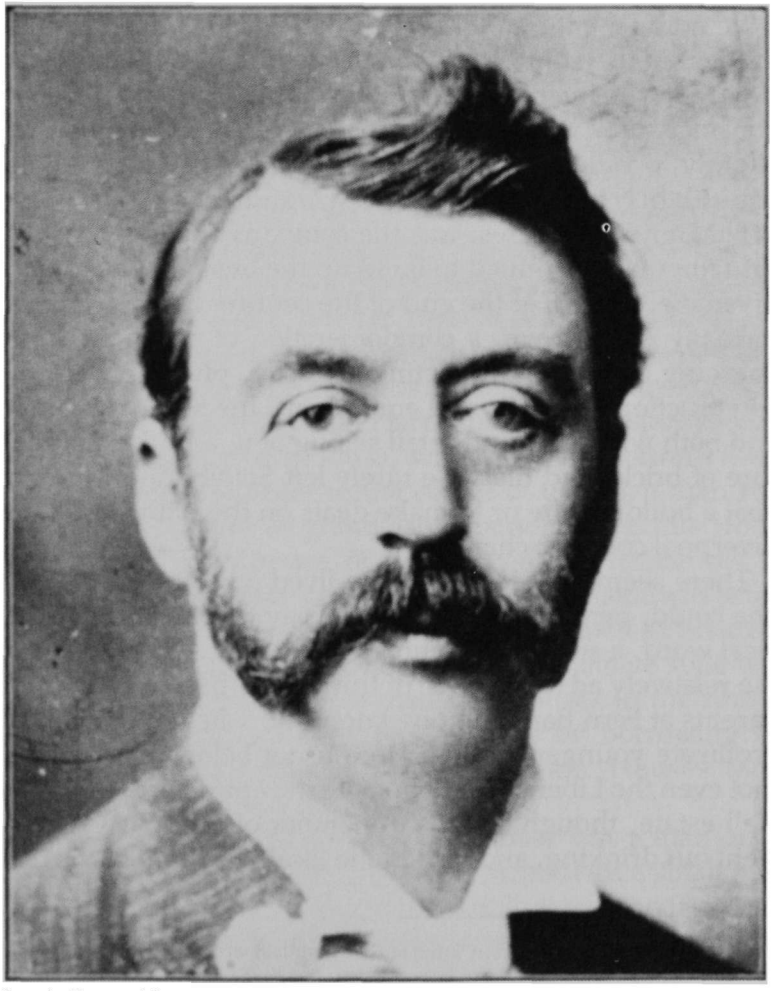

Fig. 4. George Harry Storrs.

remembered—that his Havana dangled from his hand "like a short walking-stick"). His own children considered him tyrannical, and other members of the family found him pompous and—an unexpected adjective—irresponsible.

His younger brother, George Harry (as is so often so in the north, the two names were used in referring to him, as if they were hyphenated; "Harry," incidentally, was his given name, not a corruption of Henry), was born at Fern Bank on 20 April 1860. As soon as he left school at the age of thirteen,[4] he entered the family business and learned every aspect of it.

Standing a mite under six feet, he cut a much less impressive figure than did James. His ears were a bit bulbous; by the time he was in his forties, his mousey hair was receding conspicuously where he had once parted it, giving his face a slightly lopsided appearance; a walrus mustache straggled beneath his cheeks to link up with Dundreary sidewhiskers.

His only real interest was the company. Taking over from his father, he continued to build up the business and further diversified it until at the end of the century he was running, virtually on his own, a conglomeration of activities: cotton spinning, building, contracting, painting, plumbing, trade in construction materials and equipment, the sawing of timber and both wholesale and retail selling of it, and the manufacture of bricks and tiles. He rarely left Stalybridge, except to visit a building site or to make deals on the Manchester and Liverpool cotton exchanges.

There seems no doubt that he lived a pretty spartan life; one could, perhaps, go farther and say that he was, to use a local word, a snidge, meaning a miser. Until his marriage at the relatively advanced age of thirty-one, he stayed with his parents at Fern Bank; no one knows how he got on with his profligate younger brother. He did not belong to any clubs (not even the Liberal Club opposite the entrance to the Gorse Hall estate, though he was a member of that party), never went out drinking, and visited the local theater no more than

4. Rather vague legislation in force at that time laid down that children had to remain at school until they were between ten and thirteen. A law passed in 1876 prohibited the full-time employment of children under ten.

once a year—at Christmastime, when, with one or both of his parents, he went to the pantomime. He was a regular churchgoer, but he certainly did not fill the coffers of Saint Paul's: from the front row of the gallery, Marie Fish, no more than a tot, looked down each Sunday and saw George Harry putting a halfpenny in the collecting bag; it seemed to her a very small amount from such a rich man—and comparatively smaller when, as sometimes happened, the coin was not only on behalf of himself but also of two or three other people with him in the family pew.

The indications of meanness might suggest that he was disliked by his employees, but this does not seem to have been so. After his death, when they could talk fairly freely about him, he was characterized as "jannock"—meaning that he was a good boss.

There was a deal of legal work connected with the firm's building contracts, and George Harry put this in the hands of Robert Innes, a solicitor of his own age who had had an office in Grosvenor Street, not far from the mill owned by the Leeches, since he had first taken out a practicing certificate in 1882. After a while, the business acquaintanceship developed into friendship, and George Harry sometimes visited Innes at his home, Abergeldie House, which was in Mottram Road, about half a mile closer to the center of the town than Fern Bank. Nothing like as grand as its name, Abergeldie House was a villa in a terrace of four gray-stone residences for aspiring tradespeople; goodness knows, the name was ostentatious enough for a smallish building designed by an architect who thought it nice to combine the Italianate style with Gothic, but the other three matching houses in the row attained the pinnacle of pretentiousness by borrowing the names of royal residences—Sandringham House, Marlborough House, and Osborne House.

The owner of the last-mentioned house was a man called Joseph Lindley, who was a leather currier with a small business on Cocker Hill, near the town hall, where he fashioned and sold harness for horses and straps for machines in the mills. His wife, Annie, was the daughter of a farmer in the village of Silverdale on the wrinkled northeastern hem of

Morecambe Bay, fifty miles or so north of Stalybridge. That she was proud of her ancestry is indicated by the fact that she called her own daughter, born on 19 November 1882, Marion Middleton Lindley—Middleton being Annie's maiden name.

It appears that Robert Innes was friendly with the Lindleys. It also appears that some time at the end of the 1880s Annie was visited by her sister, Mary Margaret, who was a spinster living with her father at Silverdale. Taking these two surmises, it is reasonable to believe that Innes was introduced to Mary Margaret (who, preferring her middle name, was known as Maggie) and that he in turn introduced her to George Harry Storrs.

Maggie Middleton, who was two years older than George Harry, must have been resigned to being left on the shelf. Described as "a well-built woman of average height, with strong and somewhat heavy features," she had a standoffish air about her, though this may have been due to either shyness or distancing brought about by her rural upbringing. Somehow or other, she and George Harry, himself rather taciturn, forged a relationship. He courted her, and the upshot was that on 11 August 1891 they were wed at the parish church of Silverdale in the presence of the two fathers; there is no record of who else attended the ceremony.

Presumably as a munificent wedding present to his son and new daughter-in-law, William Storrs paid £3,250 for Gorse Hall, which had lain empty since Jane Leech's death in 1884.[5] Though George Harry must have fretted at the thought of the renovation and upkeep of such a large house (as we shall see, the vastness of the estate probably did not concern him greatly, if at all), he accepted the free home; perhaps he took into consideration the fact that the Aqueduct Mill, where he had his office, was no more than a quarter of a mile to the right of the entrance gate.

After a honeymoon in Ireland, the couple moved into Gorse Hall. Only certain rooms in the house, mainly on the

5. Actually, the property remained in William Storrs's name. After his death, by an indenture of 10 December 1900, it was vested in George Harry in fee simple—or, to use simpler language, the freehold was passed to George Harry absolutely.

left of the porch, had been redecorated by George Harry's workers; the rest were kept locked. Two living-in servants—a cook and a housemaid—were employed. The only other full-time employee was called a coachman, which was something of a misnomer since caring for and driving the carriage and pair were just two duties among many; his other tasks included tending the drive and pruning the rhododendrons on each side of it, and he had a standing engagement to report to the "big house" each night to pick up any letters for the last collection from the box in Albert Square. The coachman, who lived in the "apartment" above the stables, was a married man, and his wages took into account his wife's chores of helping with the cleaning in Gorse Hall and doing the laundry. There was no gatekeeper, and the lodge—like Old Gorse Hall—was untenanted. Once or twice a year, George Harry hired casual laborers to scythe the purple-flowering mat grass, the huckleberry shrubs, and the heath rushes that grew around the waterlogged quarries and at the edge of the "blue lagoon."

Joseph Lindley, Maggie Storrs's brother-in-law, had died in the summer of 1889, and his widow shortly afterward. When Maggie had been married to George Harry for some three months, she prevailed upon him to give a home to the orphaned daughter, Marion, who was then just going on nine years of age. Marion, a rather plain girl who had what looked like a knob on the tip of her nose, became an integral member of the household—to the extent that some people in Stalybridge concluded that she was the adopted daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Storrs. Although thought rather "uppity" by some, Marion was far more gregarious than her aunt or uncle, who rarely went out together socially and were infrequently visited; they did not even have much contact with James's family (who considered "Aunt Maggie" snobbish; Thomas Entwhistle Storrs, James's youngest son by his first marriage, remembers her as being "too stiff"). The person most often at Gorse Hall was Robert Innes—now no longer living at Abergeldie House but at the comparatively splendid Holme Lea, a redstone house of three stories, topped by turrets, in the road facing Stamford Park, about half a mile from Gorse Hall on

the far side of the several railway tracks running east and west over the viaduct from the station in the center of the town.

When Marion Lindley was in her teens, and later, she saw a lot of those daughters of James who were about her age; she went rambling with them, accompanied them on trips to Manchester and the spa town of Buxton, and attended tea parties at Fern Bank. She used the carriage far more than did Maggie (George Harry hardly ever rode in it except to go to matins at Saint Paul's on Sundays). On her own or with friends, she helped out at fetes to raise funds for Hob Hill School, on the right of the entrance to Gorse Hall,[6] and sometimes went to ladies-admitted functions at the Oddfellows[7] Hall in Albert Square.

In the summer of 1903, George Harry Storrs took on as his new coachman a Stalybridge man in his mid-forties named James Worrall (and his wife Sarah). Worrall, who was short, rotund, and rosy-cheeked, turned out to be not only conscientious but, after a short while, dog-like in his devotion to his employer. As far as was thought proper in those days, George Harry relaxed the master-servant relationship: he chatted with Worrall and took an interest in his two children, and occasionally on Sundays the two men walked about the estate together.

George Harry's only obvious friend was Robert Innes, but it seems true to say that he had a *sort* of friendship with James Worrall. Just a couple of friends—but extraordinarily staunch ones. Sufficient.

By the winter of 1909, perhaps earlier, he had an implacable enemy, too. A man whose grudge against him may be said to have transcended hatred.

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6. Hob Hill House was once the property of "Ready-Money Jack" Leech; his wife and his sister set up a soup kitchen in the cellar of the house during the American Civil War, and soon afterward it was turned into both a day and Sunday school. In 1908 Beatrix Potter—by then celebrated for her authorship of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) and its sequels—came to Stalybridge to open a bazaar to help finance extensions to the school.

7. The Independent Order of Oddfellows: a fraternal society not unlike the Freemasons, with initiatory rites, secret signs of recognition, and "degrees" of dignity.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BELL

THERE WAS NO TELEPHONE AT GORSE HALL. IF George Harry Storrs ever considered having one, he may have been deterred by the cost of installing a cable all the way up the hill from Grosvenor Street (similar factors may explain the absence of either gas or electricity in the house, which was lit by oil lamps). A telephone service had first been supplied to Stalybridge in the early 1890s by the Lancashire Telephone Exchange Company, but by 1909 there were only some fifty subscribers in and around the town. It was not unusual for one line to serve several customers, an instance of this being the line installed in 1895 that was shared by the mayor, the chief constable in his upstairs office at the town hall, the police station on the ground floor, and the headquarters of the fire brigade, a few blocks away.

Probably James Worrall had never used a telephone in his life. This might explain why, instead of making a call from the Liberal Club in Albert Square, he turned up at the police station, panting and sweating, shortly before ten o'clock on the night of Friday, 10 September 1909. There had been a shooting at Gorse Hall, he told the night inspector—who, without asking for details (after all, Mr. Storrs was one of the most important personages in the district), sent a sergeant and four constables posthaste to the house. They went on foot, since the force's only "mechanized" transport was a bicycle, purchased in 1903, which was already in use that night.

If the policemen followed the standing order of Captain John Bates, the chief constable, they used the "scout's pace" (alternately run fifty steps and briskly walk fifty) advocated

by the hero of Mafeking, the recently-knighted Robert Baden-Powell;[1] allowing for the uphill trek, this should have got them to Gorse Hall within fifteen minutes.

They were admitted to the long hall by the housemaid, Eliza Cooper, a plump little woman of twenty-eight or so, who then ushered them through the first door on the left into the large room that was used as both the parlor and the dining room. There were three people there: Mr. and Mrs. Storrs and one of the rare visitors to the house, a widow called Georgina McDonald, an old friend of Maggie's who had come over from her home at Aberford, near Leeds, to stay for a few days. Marion Lindley was away on a visit and not expected back until Sunday.

George Harry had been feeling slightly under the weather—a touch of flu, perhaps, he had told his wife—and had been home all that week, having letters and messages brought to him from the Aqueduct Mill.

When the sergeant asked him to explain what had happened, he gave the following account.

At half-past nine, his wife and Mrs. McDonald were sitting at the dining table waiting for supper to be served, and he was reading in the armchair on the right of the fireplace. Looking up from his book, he saw a shadowy form outside the window. As he hurried across to investigate, a man's voice shouted: "Hands up or I'll shoot!" At the same time, there was a crash of glass as one of the window panes was broken and the barrel of a gun protruded into the room. (George Harry could not say, or was not asked, whether the gun was a rifle or a revolver.) He continued to the window and pulled down the blind. Then two shots were fired. George Harry ran toward the door, but his wife caught his arm and implored

1. Captain Bates had a special interest in anything relating to the Boer War. He was appointed chief constable a year after retiring from the army at the beginning of 1898, but took leave of absence almost at once to fight in South Africa. He is said to have been the only chief constable to do so. The Stalybridge watch committee seems to have been prepared to put up with rather a lot from the captain. In February 1908, he resigned as chief constable; but a few weeks later, when the committee had virtually chosen his successor—and caused much controversy over whether the new man should be a serving policeman or another retired army officer—he changed his mind.

him not to go out of the house. Startled by the noise, Eliza Cooper ran from the kitchen and entered the room. Mr. Storrs told her to open the front door a few inches and ring the handbell that was used to summon Worrall from his apartment above the stables.

Asked by the sergeant whether he had seen the man who was holding the gun, Mr. Storrs replied that he had only made out an indistinct figure; he pointed out that the contrast between the light in the room and the pitch-darkness outside had made it impossible to see more.

The sergeant ordered two of his men to search the house, and sent another back to the police station to provide the chief constable with details of the incident.

Captain Bates—who was a ramrod-straight man of forty-two, with a fresh complexion, brown eyes, and a spruce mustache—was located in double-quick time; indeed, it seems likely that he had already been traced by the night inspector who had spoken to Worrall. He consulted a map and noted that, although most of the grounds of Gorse Hall were in Stalybridge, the actual house was just across the Dukinfield boundary, thus making the investigation of the disturbance the responsibility of that town's police. He telephoned the information he had been given to the Dukinfield force (which was not separate but a division in the Cheshire Constabulary), and within a quarter of an hour or so the Stalybridge policemen at Gorse Hall were joined by three Dukinfield men. Combining their strengths, the members of the two forces traversed the grounds in search of the armed trespasser—but, no doubt to the relief of at least one or two of the unarmed constables, there was no sign of him.

Sparked off by the novel sight of a quintet of policemen alternately marching and running along Grosvenor Street, word had spread around the town that something was up at Gorse Hall. Before James Worrall returned from the station, there was a crowd outside the entrance gate. A couple of hours later, however, when the Stalybridge policemen left Gorse Hall to get on with their routine duties, Albert Square was deserted.

Two Dukinfield constables stayed on guard outside the

house all night. As soon as it was light, the front room was searched, but no sign was found of a bullet, a bullet hole, or shotgun pellets; an examination of the edge of the hole in the window and the shards of glass on the floor revealed no trace of powder grains or the deposit of powder smoke—and what was more, the blind was clean, the only blemish being a small slit in the shape of a figure 7. When the absence of evidence of gunfire was pointed out to Mr. Storrs, he said that "the shots must have been discharged outside and not through the window." Though Mrs. Storrs confirmed that shots had been fired, Captain Bates and Superintendent Croghan, the head of the Dukinfield force, came to the conclusion, when they discussed the incident, that there had been no explosions at all. (Perhaps it was not the official view, but another policeman voiced the opinion that, as the window was of plate glass, there might well have been a sound resembling a shot if it was struck with a metal object like a gun.) Superintendent Croghan, in his report to the deputy chief constable of Cheshire, William Leah, pointed out:

"Mr. Storr *[sic]* is not an unpopular man. . . . No motive can be assigned. It is scarcely reasonable to believe that the object was robbery as it is unusual for a thief to attempt to effect an entrance at such an early hour of the night through the window of a front room, lighted and where people were. The would-be thief or thieves would have waited for a later hour and until the household retired to bed. It could scarcely have been violence. Had such been intended, there would be plenty of opportunity and good facilities for the perpetrator to effect escape without detection as Mr. Storr generally comes home by himself—and sometimes late at night. . . . Such being the case, if shots were fired then in my opinion they were fired by an idiot or a person who was drunk." The superintendent added that inquiries were continuing.

Some time during Saturday morning, George Harry Storrs was interviewed by Inspector William Brewster and Detective Constable Hugh Kenny[2] of the Dukinfield police force. His

2. Nothing seems to have been remembered about the inspector, and there appears to be no record of his police career. Hugh Kenny was a black-haired Catholic

brother James, who was present, afterward recalled what was said.

Asked if he suspected anyone, Mr. Storrs answered with a definite no. (It appears that, when the police had left, James asked his brother whether he had *any* suspicion, no matter how slight, and received the same answer.) He mentioned, in passing, that he owned some cottages near Gorse Hall, the tenants of which kept pigeons; he said that he objected to pigeon-flying and had given the tenants notice to either get rid of the birds or leave.

One of the policemen put the question: "Have you any discharged workmen who would be likely to do a thing of this sort?"[3]

"No, I do not know of any," was the reply.

There was a follow-up question: "Is there any of your workmen that have been discharged who has anything to do with firearms in any way?"

Mr. Storrs then mentioned a man's name. (According to James, his brother did not believe for a moment that the man was the culprit, and said so to Inspector Brewster; even so, presumably the man was interrogated and cleared.)

The interview ended; but before the two policemen left, Mr. Storrs put forward an idea and a request. He suggested that he should install a bell on the flat roof of the house—a bell whose tolling would be audible at the Stalybridge police station. It would be rung if the intruder returned—but he hoped that the police would ensure that there was no further intrusion by posting a guard in the grounds at night.

Inspector Brewster said that, as there was no telephone at Gorse Hall, the notion of the bell seemed advisable. He

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Irishman who, after working as a farm laborer in County Mayo, enrolled in the Cheshire Constabulary in 1897. To move ahead of the story, let me add that his pay as a detective constable was increased to £1.11.6d on 6 November 1909, and on 29 September of the following year, he was promoted to the rank of acting sergeant (presumably with a further rise in pay, though his record sheet contains no information on this).

3. Author's note: Unless otherwise stated, all conversations and quoted remarks in this book are either taken from records or based on the recollections of the principals, whom I questioned.

pointed out, however, that since the bell would be heard more clearly in Stalybridge than in Dukinfield, it should be up to Captain Bates's force to bear the brunt of responding; he added that, since most of the estate was in Stalybridge, that town's police should be responsible for nighttime patrols, though he would see to it that members of his own force helped out. After bidding goodbye to George Harry Storrs and his brother, the inspector set off to make the arrangements with the chief constable of Stalybridge. From that night, the two constables whose respective beats ended in Albert Square—one taking in the east side, the other the west—extended their walks to include a patrol of the grounds of Gorse Hall.

Mr. Storrs added to the precautions by asking James Worrall to close the shutters on the windows and to check that the kitchen door on the left at the rear of the house was locked as soon as darkness approached each day. He got in touch with the manager of a bell foundry whom he had met when his firm carried out work at Manchester Cathedral (the construction of an extension known as the Bishop Fraser Annexe), and it was arranged that on Monday a bell would be fitted, its rope dropping through a flapped aperture beside the chimney stack to the floor of the attic. The following week, he bought a "savage dog," a cross between an Airedale and a collie—but the beast turned out to be indiscriminately savage and had to be returned to the greengrocer who had sold it.

George Henry was not the only person to consider precautions. Unknown to James Storrs, so he afterward said, his wife Amy (who, in the opinion of some of her stepchildren, was "jumped up" from humble beginnings) went to the police station and insisted that a guard be provided to protect the residents of Fern Bank. If her demand was granted, it seems that the guard was so discreet as to be invisible.

When Marion Lindley—now nearly twenty-seven—returned on Sunday, her aunt told her all about what had happened, and later Marion discussed the incident with George Harry. Apparently he had given further thought to the possible identity of the trespasser, for he mentioned the

names of two men about whom he said he had his suspicions; she knew one of the men, but the other was unknown to her.

Feeling better after his indisposition, George Harry went back to work on Monday, and when he got home soon after five o'clock, he was told that the bell was ready to be used.

At midnight on Friday, 29 October, almost exactly seven weeks after the window-breaking incident, the silence of Stalybridge was shattered by the dongg-dongg-dongg of the church-sized bell.

Eight-year-old Walter Flint, living nearly two miles away from Gorse Hall in Ashton-under-Lyne, was woken by the tolling; William Pickup, who was ten and lived in the Rassbottom part of Stalybridge, on the other side of the railway station from the "big house on the hill," had his sleep broken by what sounded to him like the "clappers of doom"; and, closer but less concerned, a little girl called Edith Spiro got the dates all wrong, confusing Friday with the following Sunday, assumed that "Master Storrs must be trying a Hallowe'en trick," and turned over and went to sleep again, despite the continued tolling of the bell.

In the grounds of Gorse Hall, the two patrolling policemen got the shock of their lives; the one near the house decided to go in search of the other, and eventually found him, looking distinctly puzzled, near the entrance gate; after a quick shouted discussion in competition with the clanging, the two of them set off up the winding drive.

At the police station, a sergeant and a constable hastily donned their helmets and, ignoring the "scout's pace" instruction, ran all the way, but more and more slowly and painfully, to Gorse Hall. In the streets, constables on beat-duty deserted their prescribed areas and lumbered southward. Perhaps Captain Bates did something, too; but if so, his action went unrecorded.

When the two patrol constables got to the house, they found Mr. Storrs standing on the porch, the door open behind him and his hazy shadow elongated before him by the oil lamp that hung near the stairs at the rear of the hall. His

watch, still attached by an Albert chain to a buttonhole in his waistcoat, was open in his hand. He looked at the timepiece, nodded at what he saw, and went into the hall and called out something the policemen did not hear to someone they could not see; after a moment or so, the tolling stopped. Mr. Storrs came back to the porch and informed the constables that he had decided to try out the bell to see if it produced the required results. This information the constables passed on when their colleagues—more than were left on the streets of Stalybridge—arrived. It is said that Mr. Storrs asked the assembled officers into the front room and offered them mulled ale, but this may be just one of the several trifling legends of the case.

Apparently thinking that discretion was the better part of valor, the senior policeman did not mention that in three days time, on the night of Monday, the first of November, there would be no one guarding the house. That would be the day of the municipal polls, and although there was no contest that year in any of the Stalybridge wards, every policeman would be needed either (as a tit-for-tat favor) to keep order in Dukinfield or the Market ward of Ashton, or to ensure that the vicarious reveling of the enthusiastic Tories and Liberals of Stalybridge was kept in check.

Mr. Storrs's home had, after all, been guarded for nearly two months, and during that time no one had been seen in the grounds or attempting to enter them. It was surely safe to leave the household unprotected for just one night.

Monday, 1 November 1909: a cloudy day brushed by light and variable winds.

Miss Hilda Beverley
and a powerful company in
DESTROYER OF A MAN
Twice-Nightly
Twopence, Fourpence
& Sixpence

Despite the alluring title of the melodrama, it is not likely

that the Stalybridge theater had good houses on the opening night of this touring production. In theatrical circles, Monday was reckoned to be "dead"—to the extent that some managements (but not the Stalybridge one) endeavored to slim "Mr. and Mrs. Wood"—in other words, empty seats—by offering two tickets for the price of one. And the habitual first-nighters (many of them shopkeepers with complimentary tickets given in exchange for the display of posters in their windows) would be depleted because of the overriding attraction of the festivities arranged by the political clubs. As has been noted, although the electors of Stalybridge did not go to the polls that day, there were enough contests in neighboring places to provide an excuse for toasts to Tory or Liberal success— or, indeed, for turncoats or the uncommitted to drink libations on behalf of both the main factions as well as the surgent Independent Labour party, led by James Keir Hardie.

At approximately five o'clock, George Harry Storrs left the Aqueduct Mill and walked home (despite the scare of 10 September, he had never asked or ordered anyone to accompany him when he returned to Gorse Hall in the dark). It is not known how he occupied himself between half-past five and about nine o'clock. He had at least one worry on his mind, and perhaps he shut himself away for part of the time to give it uninterrupted thought: William Storrs Sons & Company had constructed additional sedimentation tanks at the Dukinfield sewage works, and the council were threatening to take legal action because they considered that the clinker used was not up to standard.

By nine-fifteen, however, George Harry was whiling away the time until supper by playing patience at a small table in the dining room-cum-parlor. Maggie and Marion were seated at the center table, which Eliza Cooper, the housemaid, had just set for the evening meal; in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it can be supposed that they were quietly talking together.

Eliza went out of the room and, turning left in the hall, walked toward the kitchen, which was on the same side, its door facing the stairs across the way. She had only gone a couple of steps when the cook, Mary Evans, a slightly built

woman with a curvaceous nose, came up from the cellar under the stairs, where she had gone to get some milk.

As soon as Mary Evans entered the kitchen, which she had left only a minute or so before, she saw a man standing between the back door and the dresser. Although she afterward said that the man was "crouching," she was at first more surprised than frightened: the light was not all that good, and she assumed that the coachman had come to the house on some errand or other.

"Oh, Worrall," she said, "how you frightened me!"

But a split second later, she realized that she was mistaken. The man was nothing like Worrall—taller, thinner, and younger. To add to her confusion, he was pointing a revolver at her head.

"Say a word and I shoot," he said quietly but firmly.

The cook stared at the man, at the gun, then dropped the can of milk, turned on her heels, and scampered into the hall; she tried to pull the door shut behind her, but the man had rushed across the kitchen and was holding it.

Eliza Cooper, who was just about to enter the kitchen, was almost knocked over by the cook, who shrieked, "There's a man in the house!" and rushed past her to the front room. As the words began to make sense to the housemaid, and as shock turned to fear, the kitchen door banged back on its hinges and once again she was nearly knocked down—this time by a young man, a complete stranger to her, who was wearing a dark cap and a dark tweed suit, had a muffler round his neck, and was holding a gun in his left hand. Ignoring her, he raced after the cook. Eliza afterward agreed that she was "spellbound." She stumbled into the kitchen, hesitated a moment, then opened the back door and went into the fenced yard.

Meanwhile, Mary Evans had run into the front room. She had only come a few yards, but she was panting. Again she screamed: "There's a man in the house!"

The three occupants, having heard the earlier scream, were already on their feet. Maggie and Marion moved toward each other. George Harry made for the doorway. Both women shouted something to him, but he took no notice. He walked

into the hall, and they followed him. Not wanting to be left alone, even with three people between her and the intruder, Mary Evans staggered after them.

The oil lamp that hung near the foot of the stairs gave out a hazy amber glow. The only furniture in the hall was a hat-stand. Two Landseer-imitating pictures and four swords hung on the walls; also—odd mementos of the honeymoon in Ireland—two blackthorn cudgels with silver-mounted handles, properly called shillelaghs but known to some as "Tipperary rifles."

For a second or so, the two men faced each other just beyond the door of the front room. There were marked differences between them. George Harry Storrs was forty-nine years old, powerfully built, and just under six feet in height; he had a large mustache and side whiskers. The intruder looked to be in his late twenties; his slimness confused an estimate of his height, but he was probably somewhere between five foot six and eight; he had a slight mustache of fair hair. The main difference was, so to speak, external: George Harry was unarmed, but the intruder had a revolver—and what looked like a knife (only the handle was visible) tucked between his waistcoat and shirt.

Pointing the revolver at George Harry, the young man spoke. According to both Maggie Storrs and Mary Evans, he said: "Now I've got you," but Marion Lindley recalled the words as "I have got you now."

Whatever the exact words, they acted like a cue to George Harry, who lunged for the revolver and managed to grasp the intruder's wrist (whether of his left arm or his right, we do not know). As the men struggled, Maggie Storrs edged past them and, running to the foot of the stairs, unhooked one of the shillelaghs.

She ran back and lifted the shillelagh to strike the intruder, but he and her husband were now locked together, and she was afraid of hitting George Harry. Seeing her with the cudgel raised, the young man showed fear for the first time; pulling against George Harry's grip on his wrist, he inched the revolver, its muzzle pointing upward, toward her. "I will not shoot," he cried.

As Maggie snatched the gun away, her husband shouted at her to ring the bell. She managed to fumble the shillelagh into George Harry's hand and then dashed upstairs. On the way to the attic, she slipped the revolver under a carpet. Her mind was a ragbag of thoughts, but two disparate ones emerged from the rest: that the intruder might be "a workman animated by revenge" and that George Harry was surely powerful enough to overcome him.

Marion Lindley saw her aunt running up the stairs, and it seems that in the confusion she quite forgot about the bell and assumed that Maggie intended to lock herself in a bedroom. She dashed for the front door, pulled it open, and began to run down the winding drive to Albert Square; it did not occur to her to go to the stables to fetch James Worrall.

But Mary Evans did think of the coachman. The distinction between the front door and the servants' and tradesmen's entrance had been so drummed into her that, instead of following Miss Lindley and taking the shorter route to the stables, she raced down the hall, into the kitchen, and out into the yard. Eliza Cooper was still standing there, undecided about what to do or where to go. The cook ran round the back of the house and made for the stables, and the housemaid followed suit. Both of them out of breath by the time they reached their destination, they dragged themselves up the open wooden steps and banged on the door of the coachman's apartment. Sarah Worrall opened the door and did her best to understand as the house-servants, talking together, gave independently incoherent accounts of what had happened at Gorse Hall—and as Mary Evans alone explained what was probably still happening. Mrs. Worrall told them that her husband was in Stalybridge, where he had gone to do some shopping and then to have a drink with her brother. The last of her words were practically drowned by the tolling of the bell.

At that moment, Worrall was rapping his knuckles on the side of the serving hatch in the snug-bar of the Grosvenor Hotel. As the barman, William Burgess, took his order for two refills, Worrall said: "The bell is ringing. They must be practising again." He spoke casually, but Burgess noticed that

he finished his ale quickly, said goodnight to his brother-in-law, and left.

The sound of the bell reverberated in Marion Lindley's ears as she ran down the drive. It was back in the summer that Worrall had last taken his shears to the rhododendrons, and once or twice she staggered and felt the fleshy, glistening leaves and the dead fingers of the flowers against her cheeks and arms. The night was black, without stars, and she had the impression that she was in a tunnel—a tunnel as opaque as the one that stretched diagonally beneath the drive. At last she saw some lights ahead of her. She did not believe that she had the strength to keep on running. She passed through the gate. Only afterward did she remember that two policemen were supposed to be patrolling the grounds, and then she wondered why she had not seen either of them, or they her. The hard-packed earth of the drive gave way to cobblestones in Albert Square. The lights of the Liberal Club shone brightest; but women were not admitted there. To the left of the club was the Oddfellows Hall, where she had occasionally attended functions. She ran through the door and was aware of men looking at her, some with curiosity, others with alarm. Fighting back the sickness that welled in her throat, she tried to speak. Her voice was little more than a whisper as she said:

"My uncle is being murdered."

Matthew Greenwood, who was a millworker in his mid-thirties, and his pal Thomas Cottrell, were ardent pigeon-fanciers (unconnected with the ones so disliked by Mr. Storrs). On Sunday mornings, they put their star homing birds in wickerwork baskets that they took to the railway station for delivery to the starting point of the day's race; then they had a few drinks; and then they went back to their pigeon-shed, which was on a patch of wasteland just to the east of the Gorse Hall estate, to scan the sky for the first of their returning flock. Most nights, as soon as they had finished their respective high teas, they met at the shed to feed the birds and cosset them. At half-past nine on the first night of November, they were thinking of packing up and turning off the hurricane lamp when the bell began to ring at Gorse Hall. Having no idea what the tolling signified, they

decided to clamber over the fence to find out what was going on. When they had progressed about a hundred yards, they saw a figure rushing down the drive. They walked in the direction of Mr. Storrs's house, but then had doubts as to the wisdom of going too close; they didn't fancy being prosecuted for trespass. Matthew and Thomas stood behind a tree, listening involuntarily to the bell, and waited, but none too patiently, for someone else to take an interest in the din.

The festivities at the Liberal Club had turned a trifle sour; the polls had closed at eight o'clock, and the first returns from nearby wards indicated that the Liberals had not done well. At about a quarter to ten, there was a commotion in the paneled entrance hall: two Oddfellows had brought a woman on the premises! Admittedly, the woman—beg her pardon, *lady*—was Miss Lindley from Gorse Hall; but the steward, a former color sergeant who was a stickler for club rules, including the men-only one, didn't care if she was Queen Alexandra herself: she had to be removed. An untidy group of members had gathered around Miss Lindley by the time he arrived. The floor of the hall was of black and white squares of marble, and the men and the solitary woman looked not unlike chess-pieces that had been pushed higgledy-piggledy to one corner of a board. The steward started to point out that rules were rules, but was interrupted and peremptorily told to make a telephone call to the police station. Couldn't he hear the bell?—didn't he know that Mr. Storrs was fighting for his life?—why was he just standing and gawping, for God's sake? . . .

The telephone call was unnecessary. The tolling had been heard at the station—was still being heard—and two constables (perhaps muttering that, ten to one, this was just another false alarm) had been sent to find out what was happening. The night inspector, an officer called Beaumont, hoped to goodness that other constables on the depleted night shift, walking their extended beats in the area between the railway tracks and Grosvenor Street, would have the sense to go to Gorse Hall. Before receiving the call from the steward of the Liberal Club, he had received one from his opposite number at Dukinfield, who wanted to know if the ringing he could

hear came from the bell at Gorse Hall, and had told him to get all the men he had available to the house. Beaumont wondered whether he should try to find Captain Bates, and decided to "wait and see": after all, this would probably turn out to be a farce like the one last Friday night.

Leaving Miss Lindley sipping a glass of the club's best brandy in a private room, eight Liberal supporters, three or four of them just old enough to vote, hastened up the drive. One of them was Henry Heald, a Dukinfield man who worked as an assistant superintendent for the Wesleyan and General Assurance Society. He afterward recalled:

"As we were going at full speed, we found it exhausting. We were too excited to slacken our pace, and if we had not been excited there was the clang of the bell, urging us to lose no time. As we groped our way in the darkness, a weird creeping sensation took possession of us."

When the men were almost at the top of the hill, they were observed by Matthew Greenwood and Thomas Cottrell from their vantage point behind the tree. Only a short while before—a minute, perhaps; certainly not much longer—the pigeon fanciers had seen Mr. Storrs's coachman come up the drive and turn right toward the stables.

Close to the house, the tolling was ear-shattering, discussion-prohibiting. The front door appeared to be shut, so four of the Liberals waited near the porch while the others, Henry Heald among them, made their way round the left side of the building.

The door of the kitchen was wide open.

Heald and his particular friend, Richard Ashton, looked at each other, then entered the room; the two other men followed.

The kitchen was like an abattoir.

There was blood everywhere.

It was perhaps Heald's imagination, but he thought he could smell it.

Near the range, on the right, a clothes-horse was spread-eagled, the starched linen from it scattered about, much of it stippled with blood.

George Harry Storrs was lying on the floor, framed by an

oval of blood; his head was near the table that abutted the wall of the pantry to the left of the men, his legs were toward them.

Heald went to him and was relieved—no, surprised—to find that he was alive; conscious.

"Where's Mrs. Storrs?" George Harry asked weakly. "Where's my wife?"

Ignoring the question, Heald asked if there was a telephone in the house.

"No," George Harry whispered. It was clearly an effort for him to speak.

Heald asked: "Who attacked you?"

Now it was George Harry's turn to ignore a question. Again he asked about his wife. Heald had the distinct impression that he "could have said who the intruder was had he wanted to do so."

Showing a certain presence of mind, Heald sent two of his companions to open the front door—two rather than one because it occurred to him that the attacker might still be in the house. He told them to ask one of the men waiting outside to summon a doctor, and then to search for Mrs. Storrs.

On the table, grouped like the setting for a still-life painting, were a rose-patterned bowl of water, a tall earthenware jug, and (Heald noted it without considering it incongruous) a shillelagh.

Stepping round the stricken form, Heald placed the bowl on the floor. Using his pen-knife, he cut off Mr. Storrs' butterfly collar, and then, while Richard Ashton loosened the shirt, doused a handkerchief in water and bathed some of the blood from Mr. Storrs's face. He saw that most of the blood, perhaps all of it, had come from a cut of about three-quarters of an inch across the top of the nose. But this wound, he realized, did not account for the rest of the blood—gallons, it seemed to him—that disfigured the walls and the floor and darkened the clothing of the wounded man. The only other cuts that were visible were across the palm of Mr. Storrs's left hand, but there were jagged tears in his clothing which almost certainly marked the sites of more.

At some point while Heald was wiping around the wound

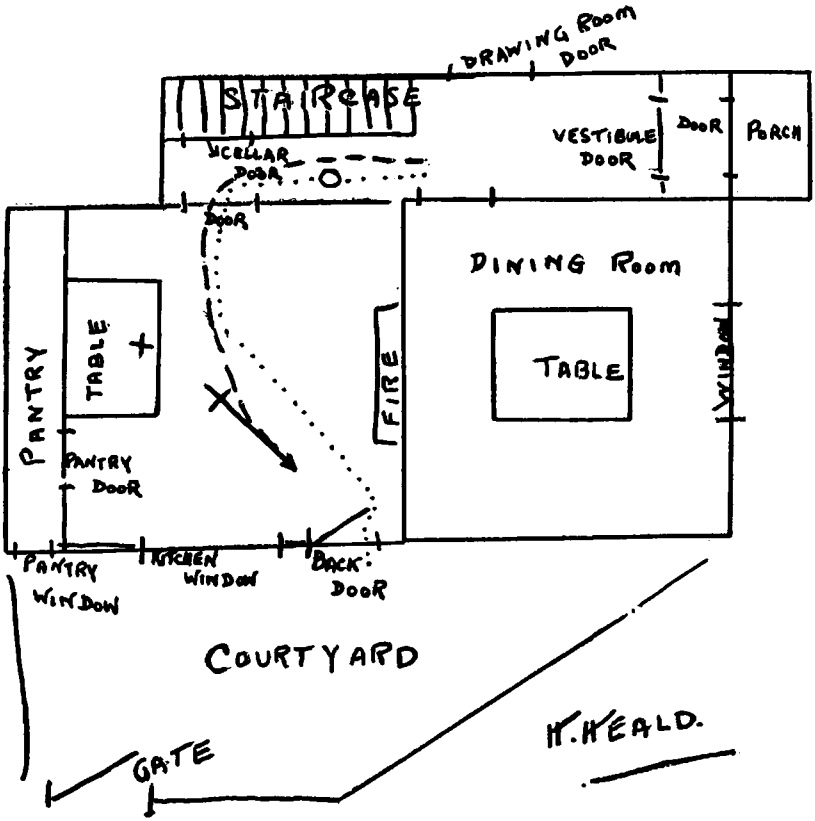

Fig. 5. Rough plan of crime scene drawn by Henry Heald. The dotted line indicates the intruder's route from the back door, and the circle the place where he passed the housemaid. The broken line shows Heald's idea of the route of the intruder and George Harry Storrs to the kitchen, and the pointed cross marks the spot where Mr. Storrs was found. The cross on the table in the kitchen shows the position of the shillelagh. Courtesy of the Chief Constable of Cheshire.

on the nose, Ashton asked Mr. Storrs who had attacked him. Just as he had done when Heald asked the same question, Mr. Storrs expressed concern about his wife.

The bell stopped ringing.

Up in the attic, Maggie Storrs had been found on her knees, her face glazed with sweat, her hands clasping the rope, which had a pretty red tassle at its end. She must have been ringing the bell for nearly half an hour. The two men who discovered her had to prize her fists from the rope. It is not known whether she inquired about her husband; presumably she did. If she asked to see him, she must have been

dissuaded, at least for the time being. She was helped to her bedroom.

The first policeman to arrive was Constable David Buckley, the most recent recruit to the Stalybridge force. He was twenty-five, and had worked in a mill until he was taken on as a probationary constable almost exactly two years before; his appointment had been confirmed by the watch committee in July 1908.

He entered the kitchen by the back door, passing Henry Heald, who had come out into the yard for some fresh air. Another of the Liberal Club members, Harry Bailey, had joined Richard Ashton.

Constable Buckley had had to deal with fights between drunks outside pubs, but he had never seen this much blood before; serious woundings, let alone crimes of murder, were rare in Stalybridge, and he probably wondered whether it might be best simply to stand in the doorway, providing a "police presence," albeit an inadequate one, until some more experienced officers arrived.

He could hear Mr. Storrs moaning, and could see from his face that he was in great pain.

Then Mr. Storrs spoke.

"I want to see my wife," he muttered. "Oh, Lord, help me."

This plea seems to have made up David Buckley's mind for him. He took a couple of steps forward and knelt.

"Who was the man?" he asked.

"I don't know," Mr. Storrs replied. He repeated this several times, then asked for brandy.

Harry Bailey went in search of some. As he walked along the hall, he saw that there was more blood out there—nothing like so much as was in the kitchen, but a distinct trail of spots running past the foot of the stairs to within a few feet of the front room. It was in that room that he saw some decanters on a highly polished chiffonier. He poured a glass of brandy and returned with it to the kitchen.

By then, two or three other policemen had arrived. And outside the back door stood James Worrall; Eliza Cooper and Mary Evans were with him. The coachman was crying. (He afterward explained that he had not come straight to the

house because he had bought some groceries in Stalybridge and decided to drop them off with his wife before finding out why the bell was being rung; he assumed that it was "just another practice," he said. He found the two house-servants in his apartment, and as soon as he heard what had happened, rushed across to Gorse Hall, with them following.)

One of the newly arrived constables had had training in first aid. He cut the clothing away to reveal deep cuts on the left side of Mr. Storrs's torso and on his left arm; some of the wounds were still bleeding. The constable called out for someone to find blankets and towels, and Mary Evans shoved Eliza Cooper through the doorway; whimpering, the housemaid scuttled across the kitchen to the hall, and eventually returned with her arms laden.

All this time, George Harry was crying out for his wife. One of the policemen who had arrived after Constable Buckley twice asked Mr. Storrs if he knew his assailant; he did not reply the first time, and said, "I don't know," when the question was put again.

He complained of a "great pain" in his back, and said that he wanted to sit up. The policeman who was wrapping the towels round the wounds suggested that a couch should be brought into the kitchen. This was done, but by the time Mr. Storrs was laid on the couch, he was lapsing into periods of unconsciousness.

It was about five minutes to ten when Maggie Storrs was either allowed to enter the kitchen or brought to the room; but her husband, who had asked for her so often and for so long, was unconscious. She swooned, but was revived by some of the brandy that had been brought to moisten George Harry's lips; she fainted again, however, and was then carried up to her bedroom.

Though Dr. Thomas Williams resided, and had his surgery, at 60 Grosvenor Street, making him the closest doctor to Gorse Hall, he was not the household's regular general practitioner. But he was called out by one of the men from the Liberal Club, and—if his estimate that he reached the house at ten o'clock was correct, as it seems to have been—must have run a good part of the way. He found Mr. Storrs gasping

for breath and whispering, "Oh, give me air . . . I want air." The doctor saw at once that there was nothing he could do; even so, he opened the kitchen window and ordered two constables to move the couch over to it.

George Harry Storrs's breathing rapidly became more forced and shallow, and he died shortly after ten.

Inspector Beaumont had not called Captain Bates; but the chief constable turned up at the police station at half-past nine. As soon as he heard of the telephone call from the steward of the Liberal Club, he himself put through a call to the home of Superintendent Croghan, the officer in charge at Dukinfield, who logged the conversation at 9:35. It "seemed," said Captain Bates, that there had been a breaking and entering at Gorse Hall.

Leonard J. Croghan (who, like his subordinate, Detective Constable Kenny, was a native of Ireland) had risen comparatively quickly through the ranks—but how he had reached his exalted position was something of a mystery to some of the officers he commanded, who considered him less than efficient and at times rather dilatory. Still, he acted promptly after speaking to Captain Bates, ordering the police wagon to be brought round from the courtyard at the rear of the station, and then setting off along Chapel Street and Foundry Street toward the entrance of Gorse Hall. After turning right on to the drive, he had only gone a few yards when he saw a little bald-headed man hurrying along in front of him. The superintendent pulled on the reins and asked the man to identify himself, and it turned out that he was Ambrose Rodocanachi, a doctor with Greek forebears who only a few months before had been appointed assistant surgeon at the infirmary and who ran a surgery just opposite Dr. Williams's. He explained that he had received a message from Dr. Williams, asking him to go to Gorse Hall, where there had been an attempted murder.

"Attempted *murder*?" Croghan queried, thinking that that was a lot more serious than the breaking and entering that Captain Bates had mentioned, and without waiting for the

little doctor to reply, told him to get into the wagon, Gladstone bag and all, and whipped the horse up the hill.

The superintendent got to the house at five minutes past ten—to learn that the attempted murder Dr. Rodocanachi had spoken of had just become *actual* murder.

Though Gorse Hall was large, the ground floor was overcrowded. Five or six members of the Liberal Club were still present. Captain Bates must have come along as soon as he had telephoned Croghan, for he was in the kitchen with Beaumont, his night inspector. There were half a dozen Stalybridge constables and three or four of Croghan's men. Dr. Williams was examining the wounds on the dead man's body. And—last of all, one would think—there were the servants: James Worrall, Mary Evans, and Eliza Cooper. Apparently more people had entered the house, because Croghan afterward wrote in his report that, apart from the police, "12 or 15 others were there."

Croghan had a quick chat with Captain Bates, and then, respectively, they ordered some of their constables outside to search the grounds. Captain Bates also told PC Buckley to set off for the railway station, explaining that he had one, two, or three things to do when he got there: see if there was a man waiting on any of the platforms who looked at all suspicious; if there wasn't, ask the station staff if they had seen anyone boarding a train since about a quarter to ten who had been out of breath, bloodstained, or both; if they hadn't, watch the entrance.

Though Stalybridge had only a single railway station, it was an important one, owned jointly by three companies, the Lancashire & Yorkshire, the Great Central, and the London & North Western. Among the places that were easily accessible from the station were Huddersfield, the "fancy" woolen town eighteen miles to the northeast; Oldham, which was five miles north; and the sprawling manufacturing city of Manchester, eight miles west. The station was open twenty-four hours a day, even though no trains stopped there between 11:50 P.M. (last train to Stockport) and 2:19 A.M. (the Leeds-Liverpool mail train).

Another action taken by Captain Bates was to send Inspector Beaumont back to the town to alert the constables on beat-duty to keep their eyes open for the culprit, and to get some of the day-shift men out of their beds and onto the streets.

Superintendent Croghan, for his part, sent one of his men to the Dukinfield police station with a message for the night inspector to, first, circulate a "seek-and-apprehend" call among neighboring divisions and constabularies, and second, put through a telephone call to Major Richardson at his home in Harrow, near the college, and ask him to travel up with some of his bloodhounds.[4]

Now that it was possible to move around the kitchen without bumping into anyone, Croghan examined the room and the adjoining scullery and pantry, which were through a door in the right-hand wall as one entered the kitchen from the hall. He observed

> a quantity of blood on the floor of the kitchen, where I was informed deceased was found lying. There were marks of blood on the scullery door, kitchen side, and on the door-knob, and on the inside of the door at the top and at the side; two smears had apparently been made with fingers on the panel (inside). Marks were in evidence on the scullery floor; there were blood marks on the slop stone, on the wooden rail on the window sill, and on the wall at the side of the window. Also stains on glass above the catch (no marks on window catch). There were no bloodstains outside window. The scullery window was broken, and a tin wash-basin in scullery had apparently been used for the purpose, as it was outside the window in yard with marks on it and badly dented. I was unable to trace any blood marks on the flags in the yard.
>
> There were marks of blood on kitchen door (kitchen side) leading from kitchen into hall; the blood had trickled down to the floor, a distance of 3 ft. 6 in. There are bolts on the back door, the scullery door, also on door leading from kitchen into hall.

In the hall, Croghan noticed bloodstains "on the right side

4. The major's hounds had achieved a sort of fame by being employed in a number of murder investigations, most recently that of the shooting of Mrs. Caroline Luard at a summerhouse near her home at Ightham, Kent (24 August 1908); it seems to have been an unjustified fame, however, for there is no indication that the hounds ever contributed to the apprehension of a murderer.

of the dining room near door jamb and 4 feet from floor; one mark appeared to have been caused by someone pressing against the wall." By now, some blood had been trampled from the kitchen, and one wonders whether Croghan assumed that *all* the blood on the floor had been transferred from that room: certainly, he did not notice the trail of spots seen by Harry Bailey when he went for the brandy—so either he was insufficiently observant or the trail of spots was no longer distinct.

The superintendent sent for the two house-servants and listened to their accounts of the time between the discovery of the intruder and their dash to the stables. He came to the conclusion, as did others afterward, that the continuation of the story was told by the bloodstains and the broken window in the scullery:

Either Mr. Storrs, despite being wounded, had managed to overpower the young man in the hall and had dragged him to the kitchen, or the two of them—moving down the hall as they struggled or one chasing the other—had entered the kitchen; there Mr. Storrs had forced the intruder into the scullery and locked the door on him. The intruder had broken the scullery window with the tin washbasin, climbed out into the yard, and returned to the kitchen by the open back door. Mr. Storrs, standing in the room or already lying where he was found, had again been attacked, and his assailant had then run away.

Croghan was still in the hall when there was a rapping at the front door. When he opened it, he saw two of the constables who had been sent to search the grounds. They were not alone. Two civilians were with them, their arms gripped by the constables. One of the latter explained that the men had been found standing by a tree within sight of the house. They claimed, he said, that their names were Matthew Greenwood and Thomas Cottrell, and that, hearing the bell while they were in their pigeon-pen outside the grounds, they had climbed over the fence to see what was happening. Croghan asked the two men if they wanted to add anything to this sparse account. Nothing, Matthew Greenwood said misera-

bly—except that Thomas and he had seen someone running down the drive before anyone turned up.

Croghan ordered the constables to bring the men into the hall, close to the light, and there he looked them up and down. Though they were not particularly clean, they did not appear to have the slightest spot of blood on them. Were they able to describe the person they had seen? Croghan asked. They both shook their heads, and one of them said that it was so dark—and as they were not all that close to the drive, which was flanked by bushes most of the way—that they could not even say whether they had seen a man or a woman.

Croghan felt pretty sure that they were not involved in the crime; even so, just to be on the safe side, he had a word with Captain Bates, and it was agreed that Greenwood and Cottrell should be taken to Stalybridge police station, there to be further questioned about their illicit entry and to see if their memories could be jogged about the fleeing figure. (They were kept at the station for several hours, but really had themselves to blame: when it was put to them that they had seen Miss Lindley, they both said that they thought they could have told from the gait and shape of the figure that it was a woman. So they were left in a cell to try and come up with some particle of description. Not until they were falling asleep on the wooden-pillowed bunks, exhausted by the unsuccessful taxing of their memories, were they allowed to go home.)

The two doctors, Williams and Rodocanachi, cleared everyone from the kitchen, locked the doors and pulled the blind over the window, and removed the clothes from the corpse. There was so much blood on the body that it was difficult to assess the number of wounds, but the doctors reckoned that there were about a dozen,[5] most of them on the left side, on both the chest and back. It was a good deal easier to state the cause of death: hemorrhage and shock caused by the wounds.

After draping a blanket over the corpse, the doctors

5. An underestimate: fifteen were revealed during the autopsy.

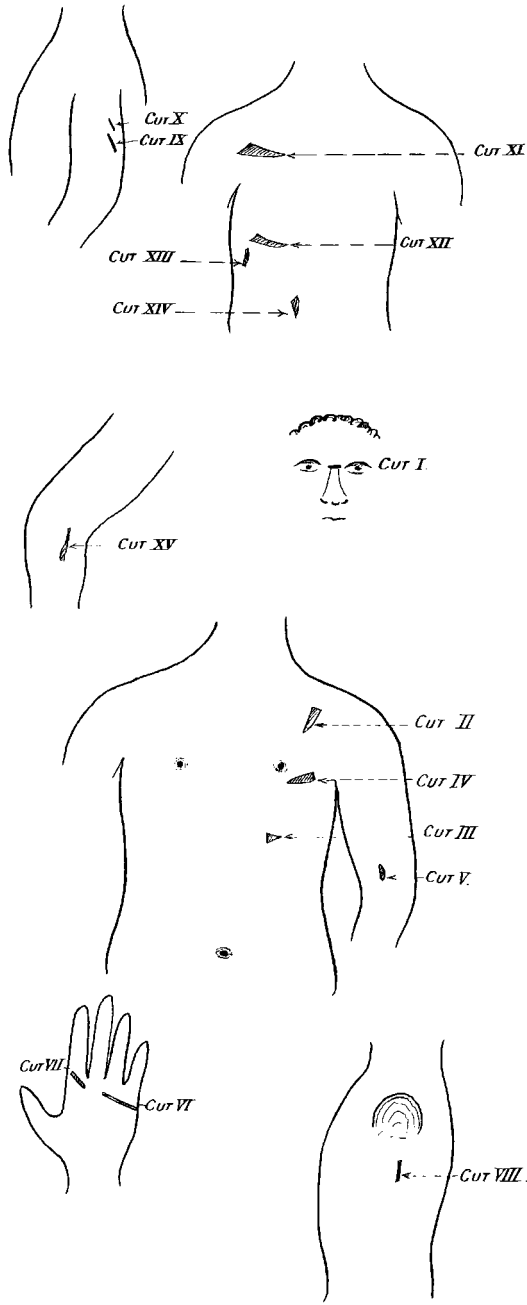

Fig. 6. Dr. Williams's drawings of the size and position of the wounds.

washed their hands in the scullery and went up to see Mrs. Storrs. Marion Lindley had returned and was sitting in a chair beside the bed on which her aunt was fitfully sleeping. She said that she intended to stay there during the night. One of the doctors offered her a sleeping draught, but she refused it. Leaving the phial on a table in case Mrs. Storrs awoke and was unable to get back to sleep, the doctors walked quietly from the room. Before leaving the house, they spoke to Superintendent Croghan, giving him details of their preliminary examination of the body, telling him that they had decided not to remove it to the mortuary at the town hall until the next day, and mentioning that they had put the dead man's clothes on the table in the kitchen.

As the doctors left, James Storrs arrived. Perhaps the police had visited Fern Bank to tell him of his brother's death; perhaps he had come in response to the bell (though he had not turned up on the Friday); or perhaps a neighbor or friend had informed him that a crime of some sort had been committed at Gorse Hall. The last possibility is not the least likely: rumors, stories, and even a few facts had spread through the town like wildfire—James's coachman needed to slow the horse to walking pace in Albert Square, which was crowded from the entrance gate to the Liberal Club, from Hob Hill School to the start of Grosvenor Street.

James spoke first of all to his friend Captain Bates, then to Superintendent Croghan, and then to both officers together. There is no record of his first reaction to his brother's death (that is if one excludes the story, passed down through the Storrs family, that, before leaving Fern Bank, he got his next-door neighbor, Sidney Mills, to accompany him—which may have been simply because he wanted company during the ride)—but in the days that followed, people noticed that he seemed shocked but not surprised by what had happened.

When James asked to see the body, Croghan demurred. But James insisted and was eventually taken into the kitchen. Standing behind him, Croghan had a brain wave: as soon as James had pulled the blanket back over his brother's face, the superintendent asked him to witness the examination of the clothes. (There had been accusations in both Dukinfield and

Stalybridge of thefts by policemen, and maybe Croghan decided to take no chances in a case of this importance.) James agreed, and Croghan ordered Constable James Schofield, who was on duty in the kitchen, to go ahead.

Schofield afterward reported:

> I found in the pockets the following articles, viz.
> cash £2.6.6d, one leather card case, pipe & pouch, 2 pocket knives, one pocket book, 3 match boxes, cigar case & holder, bunch of keys, and a number of bills.

When James Storrs had signed the inventory and left the kitchen, Constable Schofield searched for and listed the cuts in the clothing, starting with the jacket, going over the waistcoat, the trousers, the shirt, the waistbelt, the drawers and the singlet, and finishing up with the braces. There was at least one cut in each article—and as many as seventeen in the jacket—but it would be redundant to itemize them: confusing, too, since, or course, many of the cuts were duplications in the sense that, for instance, one blow from the knife had caused a cut in the jacket, waistcoat, shirt and singlet.

By about one o'clock in the morning, all the constables who had been detailed to scour the grounds had returned. Some had then been sent to guard the entrance gate, where a large crowd was still gathered; others had been ordered to patrol the streets of Stalybridge: a couple had been dispatched to keep young David Buckley company at the railway station. And one had been given the revolver—which had been found under the carpet where Mrs. Storrs had hidden it—and told to take it to Dukinfield police station and lock it in the safe .[6]

In the early hours, Superintendent Croghan received a message that a suspicious character had been arrested by Inspector George Bailey of the Ashton Borough police force and was being driven to the Dukinfield police station. His

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6. Presumably a covering was put around the revolver to protect any fingerprints. One of the oddities of the case is that, so far as can be seen, no one ever spoke of an examination of the weapon for prints; it may be that such an examination was carried out but that both Mr. and Mrs. Storrs's handling of the revolver had obliterated or smeared the prints of the murderer.

hopes high, Croghan rushed to the station, getting there a few minutes after the arrival of Inspector Bailey with the prisoner. Bailey explained that he had gone to Ford's lodging house in Ashton and instructed the residents to get out of bed and strip: one of them, the prisoner, had slight wounds, seemingly recently inflicted, on his hands and chin; a search of his bag revealed a leather apron on which were bloodstains; and the owner of the lodging house said that the man had arrived at half past ten. The naked man protested his innocence, claiming that he was a traveling whitesmith and bell-hanger who had been working for the past few days in the Hollinwood district of Ashton; he said that he had suffered the wounds while he was working. But Bailey was not satisfied (and one wonders whether his suspicion was increased by the subconscious association of bell-ringing and bell-hanging). Croghan asked the obvious question: Had inquiries been made in Hollinwood? The answer was a rather embarrassed no, so Croghan asked the man if there was anyone who had witnessed his accident. There was. Within an hour, the witness had been traced, what the bell-hanger had told was confirmed, and Inspector Bailey was on his way back to Ashton in company with the former prisoner, who was twopence better off by courtesy of the Dukinfield police force expense fund.

Leonard Croghan knew that he had a long day ahead of him. He decided against going back to Gorse Hall; but he also decided not to go home. The police station formed part of a structure, only six years old, that was designed in "poor-man's Gothic" and constructed of bricks the color of terra-cotta; the building contained the Dukinfield magistrates' court and living quarters for both an inspector and a sergeant. Knowing that one of these officers was up at Gorse Hall, Croghan got the spare key to his quarters and went to sleep in the bed for a few hours.

The case had many of the ingredients of a circulation-boosting newspaper story: *wealthy man slain. . . revenge the likely motive. . . drama in a lonely mansion. . . tolling of the*

bell. . . niece's race to summon assistance: the main points were ready-made headlines.

Early on Tuesday, a day of drizzling rain, reporters from Manchester and London started streaming into town by train, tram, and carriage; one or two star feature-writers came by car. Stalybridge's solitary hotelkeeper and the several owners of guesthouses were soon rummaging around for their NO VACANCY signs.

The reporters started scribbling in their notebooks as soon as they arrived; some did not wait that long but penned their opening paragraphs before the fact. There were two sorts of output. One was the result of ferreting for information (*any* information from anyone who was willing to chat—and that included people who had been in Albert Square the night before and some who hadn't),and usually started off something like, "Your special correspondent has gleaned from an unimpeachable source. . . . " The other was of the every-story-tells-a-picture species, which requires an example:

"A dreary waste of moors with a lone grey house, dimly outlined in the mist, peeping through scrubby foliage. A time-stained gaunt old house, a house that speaks of mysteries and whispers of tragedies. A gloomy, dreary, depressing house, a house that one reads of in thrilling but impossible novels. If ever there was a house designed for the scene of a murder this is the house." And so on. And on. And on until the number of words required by the editor had been achieved.

After using up the little that was known about the crime (both the Stalybridge and Dukinfield police forces were very reticent and individual policemen were either in the dark about details or keeping mum), the reporters were much obliged to the local vicar, who, after visiting Gorse Hall, provided some "human interest" by saying that Mrs. Storrs was "prostrated"—confined to her bed and being attended by a doctor. (As has been mentioned, her regular general practice was not Dr. Williams. He spent the day visiting his own patients and conducting examinations at his surgery in Grosvenor Street; perhaps his busyness on Tuesday accounts

for the fact that he did not carry out the autopsy on the body of George Harry Storrs until the afternoon of the next day.)

The reporters were doubtless cheered up at about ten o'clock by the arrival from Ashton-under-Lyne of Mark Platt, a mill furnisher who trained bloodhounds in his spare time. Whether he came at the invitation of the police or on his own initiative is not known, but he caused quite a stir as he turned up at Gorse Hall with two of his animals, Faithful (purchased from Major Richardson, who was en route from Harrow) and Princess Lewina. The hounds were dragged to the yard outside the kitchen, and, after sniffing the flagstones, went zigzagging off, with Mr. Platt and several policemen in pursuit; an hour and a half later, they stopped, perhaps from exhaustion, beside a water-filled quarry near Hunter's Tower, and their owner and the following policemen, fewer than had started out, caught up with them and stared into the hole. Then the party, canine and human, traipsed back to the house. When Faithful, Princess Lewina, and Mark Platt came out into Albert Square, the last-named told the reporters, as he had earlier informed the police, that he had a strong belief that the knife or the man who had wielded it, or maybe both, would be found in the quarry, and he suggested that the still waters should be dragged. Then he went home (but returned the next day with two hounds—whether the same pair or two fresh ones was not reported—and finished up at a quite different quarry, which tends to suggest that on both occasions the dogs developed a thirst).

Major Richardson, with two of *his* hounds, drove into Stalybridge at midday. He was not in a happy frame of mind. After setting off in the middle of the night, he had had a puncture, smashed into a cart, and twice been slowed almost to a halt by fog. The major may have been an expert hound-trainer but he appears to have been poor at sums: he boasted that one of the dogs he had brought along had taken part in four murder investigations—one at Epsom, one in Hampshire, and another in Scotland. His animals, after being taken to sniff around the yard, showed a partiality for a clump of rhododendrons at the back of the house; they paid one visit, were dragged away, but insisted on going back. If one discounts the notion that they were attracted by a canine scent

(there being no evidence that Faithful and Princess Lewina went anywhere near these bushes), perhaps one should accept the major's inference—as, according to him, the police did. "There is no doubt," he stated, "that the man lay in the bushes for some time, watching for a chance to enter the house." Blaming the scent-deadening drizzle for his hounds' short run, he set off back to Harrow (and the next day sent a bill for £20 to the Dukinfield police force).

Staying for a moment with items that helped fill up the newspaper stories, it is probably worth mentioning that reporters came across, or were approached by, two or three people who claimed to have seen the murderer fleeing; it is not known whether these people had already informed the police of their sightings or did so subsequently. An example:

"Two lovers declare that on the night of the murder they saw a man leap over the wall surrounding Gorse Hall, and run in the direction of Newton Moors [south of the house]. It was a moonlight night [it wasn't], and they had a good view of the runaway, but as poaching is common in this district, they did not pay particular attention to the incident. They could not identify the man."[7]

Information of this sort was noted, and sometimes taken notice of, by the police. It was one task among too many. On the first full day of the investigation, they also photographed the kitchen and the hall and made plans showing the position of bloodstains; carried out an intensive search of the yard and a less thorough one of the grounds; having examined the revolver for fingerprints (?), dispatched it to Alfred Pickford, a gunsmith in Manchester, and requested a report "with all convenient speed"; skimmed what appeared to be clots of blood from the surface of water in a sunken tub—disused since the death of Jane Leech, who had kept goats—and sent a jar containing the "clots" to Dr. Carter Bell, the county

7. Author's note: I have met, or received letters from, people who either claim that they saw the murderer escaping or say that they had a parent or grandparent who did. For instance: "The night of the murder, Ivy's mother was coming up Mostyn Street [situated about 650 yards from Gorse Hall; this street runs into Cheetham Hill Road, where James Storrs lived before moving to Fern Bank]. A fellow ran L for leather past her. She reckoned he was the murderer, on his way home after throwing the weapon in the 'blue lagoon'."

analyst, in Chester (the analysis showed that they were plankton); interrogated local men who had been convicted of crimes involving violence, searched for men who had attracted attention by their appearance or behavior (especially an itinerant concertina-player who had been seen in a pub late on the Monday night, one side of his face "cut, scarred and raw": located two days later, he explained that he had received the wounds when he fell off his bicycle on the previous Friday, and was able to prove it), and checked the alibis of men who had been arrested in other towns and brought to the Dukinfield and Stalybridge police stations; interviewed the victim's relatives, friends, and employees (and accepted an offer of £100 reward for information leading to a conviction, tendered by James Storrs on behalf of the family); guarded the grounds of Gorse Hall, chiefly against over-inquisitive reporters. Et cetera.

That the case was now the responsibility of the whole county constabulary, not just the Dukinfield division, was shown by the arrival of Cheshire's chief constable, Colonel John Henry Hamersley, and his deputy, William Leah.

At sixty-seven, Colonel Hamersley was thinking about retiring and enjoying more outings with the Cheshire Hunt around his home, Summer Hill, near the market town of Tarporley, thirty-five miles southwest of Stalybridge. After serving twenty years in the Cheshire Regiment, he had spent three months learning police work in London and Oxford as preparation for becoming chief constable of Cheshire in 1881 (his starting salary was £500 a year, and he was allowed £150 for traveling expenses, but presumably both amounts had been raised over the years).

William Leah, who sported a splendid dark mustache that curled out to the tip of his nose and returned in the direction of his chin, was only the second policeman to have been appointed deputy chief constable of the county; he had had the job since 1901. He was a hard taskmaster, and on several occasions he had rebuked Leonard Croghan—the last time being in September, for slowness in reporting on the window-breaking incident at Gorse Hall and for delegating the inquiry to subordinates instead of conducting it himself:

Supt. Croghan:
What did YOU do upon receipt of this information besides sending a Sergt. and two Constables to enquire?
Prompt answer.

W. Leah, D.C.C., 15.9.09

Perhaps, in the light of the interest of Faithful and Princess Lewina in one, maybe two, of the quarries, Colonel Hamersley ordered that all three of them, together with the "blue lagoon," should be dragged; if nothing was found in them, he said, and if the case was still unsolved, then pools and mill-lodges in the district should also receive attention. So on Wednesday morning, at first light, three shirt-sleeved constables began using grappling irons in the quarries.

"Very slow and tedious work," noted the correspondent for the *Stalybridge Reporter,* who observed the activities while sitting on the wall bounding the highest part of the estate. "One man standing on a rocky shelf would throw his grapnel into the middle of the water. Bubbles would scurry to the surface and then stop; the grapnel had reached the bottom. Then the man would haul steadily and slowly on the line like a hand-line fisher landing a big fish, and eventually there would clatter against the rocks his metal grapnel. He would overhaul his catch carefully as he disentangled it with his hands from the prongs of the grapnel. Weeds, dark green weeds, and mud—that was the most usual catch. Sometimes a piece of stick, sometimes a broken tree root, but more often than not nothing but weeds. Another man on the further side was doing just the same thing: a third man was at one end of the water, and the 'plump' of their irons as they threw them in time after time was almost a regular beat. Captain Bates, chief of the Stalybridge police, was there, looking quietly on. Occasionally he would give a direction quietly, but for the most part the men worked in silence. First one pit was dragged in this way, then another, and then the third. Nothing was found; weary work and not a single clue."

Certainly, the police could have done with some clues. So far, they had just one: the revolver. Actually, that is not quite right—they had the murderer's description, compiled from what Mrs. Storrs, Miss Lindley, and the two house-servants

had told Inspector William Brewster. But the description seemed virtually useless, since it could be applied to thousands of men:

> About 25 to 27 years of age; 5 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 8 in. high; thin features; very fair to pale complexion; slight moustache, which may have been shaved off.

(A point mentioned by all the eyewitnesses except Mrs. Storrs was not included in the circulated description because it was so amorphous: there was "something peculiar" about the murderer's eyes, they said.)

Alfred Pickford, the Manchester gunsmith, wasted no time in examining the revolver. He wrote his report on Wednesday, then stowed the gun in a case, and gave the report and the case to an apprentice, who boarded a Stalybridge-bound

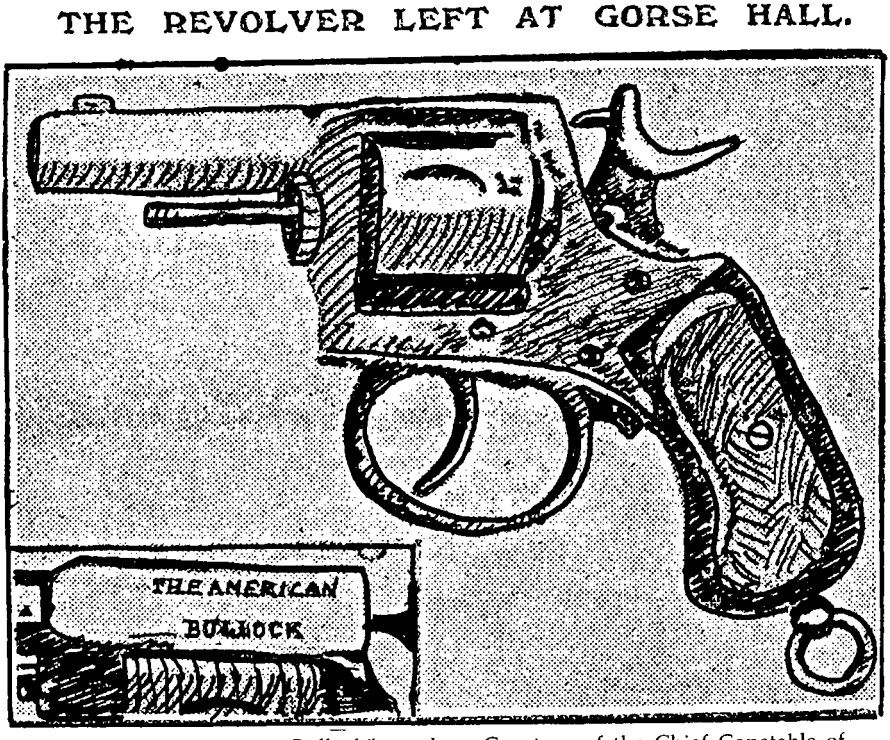

Fig. 7. The "American Bullock" revolver. Courtesy of the Chief Constable of Cheshire.

train at Exchange Station, and twenty-two minutes later walked the mile and a half to the Dukinfield police station, where, as instructed, he handed his burdens to Superintendent Croghan and got a receipt.

In his report, Pickford started off by telling Croghan something he already knew about the revolver: its brand name was "The American Bullock"; these words were stamped above the cylinder. But now the gunsmith provided information that was new, perhaps useful, to the superintendent. The word "American" was not to be taken literally, for the chunky weapon had been made in Europe, probably in Belgium. Though mass-produced, the model was not common in Great Britain; indeed, Pickford had never seen one before. There was no proof mark on the gun. In Pickford's opinion, it had *intentionally* been made useless by the removal of the swivel-pin connecting the hammer and the main spring—but perhaps there had been an attempt to make it *appear* dangerous by jamming into one of the five chambers a cutdown rifle cartridge, just the sort that was used by the army and the territorial reserves. Adding to the crippling of the revolver, the trigger spring was missing and the extracting rod was bent. All in all, it was not a weapon but a mere "ornament"—or something to threaten with. If the dust in the four empty chambers was anything to go by, the gun had not been used since the beginning of August at the earliest. Maybe the most important point of all was that there were seven neatly incised and equidistant scratches on the barrel—surely a form of identification rather than a tally of victims.

The problem, of course, was to find out who had owned, borrowed, or stolen the revolver. Later in the day, it was dispatched to the Cheshire Constabulary headquarters in Chester, where it was photographed in profile. A print of the photograph was sent to the *Police Gazette*, the publication distributed to all forces in the country, with a note giving details of the revolver and asking for assistance in ascertaining who had last had it in his possession. Other prints were taken to the Manchester offices of national newspapers, this time with a suggested caption referring only to salient information about the gun's design and defects. Later in the

month, descriptive notices were hung in pubs and post offices in and around Stalybridge.

It seems that the sole member of the public who thought he recognized the American Bullock was the stage manager/carpenter at the Theatre Royal, Oldham, who told the local police that, about six weeks before the murder, a young man wearing blue overalls had tried to sell him a very similar gun; when he was shown the real thing, however, he could not be sure whether it was the one that had been offered to him as a prop.

Though the press less-than-altruistically helped the police by reproducing the photograph, some papers printed reports and articles that were critical of the investigators of the "mansion murder" in particular and of the British police in general. There may have been a touch of sour grapes about this, for many editors considered that the police tended to keep investigative details too close to their chests. A week after the murder of George Harry Storrs, one paper concluded that the case would remain unsolved, and presented a list of officially[8] unsolved murders going back to 1897.

One of the two local papers, the *Ashton Herald*, did not indulge in "police-bashing" but showed its interest in the history of the area when it commented in an editorial:

> Amongst the crimes of recent years none can compare in the slightest degree with that of Monday night for wicked callousness and brutality, and one has to go back to the Bill's-o'-Jack's murder, at Saddleworth in 1832, to find a parallel. On that memorable occasion a father and son were done to death, and that double deed has gone down to posterity as another of the undiscovered crimes of which the police have records. . . . It is said that "murder will out." In this latest case everybody hopes that it will, for though the perpetrator of the ghastly crime has the curse of Cain upon his head, there will be more satisfaction to the public if legal English punishment can be meted out to him.

The papers used up a good few columns in theorizing

8. The list was not altogether fair since it contained cases in which guilty parties had been arrested, charged, but then acquitted—because of inadequate presentations by the prosecution and/or subjective thinking by jurymen; for instance, the Peasenhall case (the murder of Rose Harsent by William Gardiner in 1902) was cited.

about the motive for the crime. Most of them came to the conclusion that it was revenge, all ruled out the notion that the culprit was a plain and simple robber who had been panicked into killing, and one, the *Daily Telegraph*, passed on the suggestion that

> the crime was committed by a blackmailer, and the murder was not the primary object of the visit to the mansion. In support of this theory it is urged that if murder was really intended, the man who committed it would not have used the harmless revolver as his first line of attack and reserved his knife until he was in a corner, but would have used his deadliest weapon at once.
>
> Of course, it must be assumed that Mr. Storrs knew the assailant. . . . It is quite possible that when the two men met in the darkened *[sic]* passage Mr. Storrs had no idea who the intruder was, and that he did not discover his identity until after the revolver had been dropped *[sic]* and the members of the household had hurried from the room to raise the alarm. . . .
>
> To accept this theory it is not necessary to suppose that Mr. Storrs was other than an innocent victim of the blackmailer. It is clear that the assailant knew his way about the place, otherwise he could not have escaped in the way he did, and it is equally clear that either he or his confederate had watched the house during the six *[sic]* dreary weeks the police had given special protection to the mansion. The murder was committed the first night the constables were withdrawn, and only a person who had paid particular attention to the place would know that there had been a temporary break in the special vigil of the constables.

Turning an acorn into a chestnut tree, the reporter for the *Chronicle* pointed to "the singular circumstance that after such a savage struggle the murderer did not leave his cap behind. It is common knowledge that in a rough and tumble a man generally loses his head-gear. It may, however, have been that the man's main object in returning to the kitchen after his escape from the scullery, where he was locked in by Mr. Storrs, was to recover his cap, and that in passing his prostrate victim he thought it safer to make sure by administering the last fatal stab." (Actually, according to Dr. Williams's report on the autopsy, no single wound had been fatal, but death was due to loss of blood from many of them, together with shock.)

Many of the notions put forward in the press were secondhand, picked up by reporters from pub talk in Sta-

lybridge and Dukinfield or by listening to the chat of knots of natives in Albert Square. (As the days passed, some of the natives grew venturesome and walked up the drive, hoping to see something to add to the gossip, so William Leah brought along a ferocious-looking but actually docile Great Dane to deter intruders.) The special correspondent for the *Weekly Dispatch*, whose prose was tacked together with non sequiturs, started off one of his reports:

"This astounding murder mystery has made a sort of amateur Scotland Yard of the whole neighbourhood, and the assassin could not have more mysteriously disappeared if an aeroplane had carried him in the dark from the spot."

On Thursday, in the words of the *Ashton Herald*,

> All interest in the investigations disappeared for the time being, and the interest of the public was directed to the funeral, fixed for twelve o'clock. At intervals from ten o'clock, coaches, some containing mourners and others wreathes and floral tributes, proceeded up the long winding drive to Gorse Hall. Some of the mills closed to give the work-people the opportunity of watching the proceedings. As the morning wore on the crowd in Grosvenor Street increased, and by the time the solemn procession left the Hall there were a tremendous number of people in Albert Square. The hearse containing the body was drawn by two plumed black horses. On the coffin reposed a magnificent cross which was Mrs. Storrs' last tribute to her devoted husband.
>
> The procession was headed by a large number of work-people—men and women—and following the hearse came close upon twenty coaches containing the chief mourners and leading public men of the district. Another coach was filled with beautiful floral emblems. The greatest respect was shown for the murdered man, and as the cortege emerged from the drive the people, who in Albert Square alone numbered many hundreds, bared their heads, whilst others who knew Mr. Storrs intimately were moved to tears.
>
> All along the mile-long route the thoroughfares were densely crowded. In the vicinity of St. Paul's churchyard an even greater crowd was assembled; the road was impassable, and the tram service had to be temporarily delayed. It can safely be said that tens of thousands of people watched the funeral. The blinds of the houses and shops all along the route were lowered as a mark of respect.

After the service, "it could be seen that Mrs. Storrs was suffering from the shock occasioned by her husband's untimely death, and had to be assisted about."

The family mourners retired to Fern Bank, where, punctiliously arranged by Amy Storrs, cordials and sandwiches were ready.

There were one or two things that needed to be discussed between James and Maggie. First of all, there was the future of the firm. James's eldest son, William Hargrave Storrs, had been George Harry's right-hand man, and it was agreed that, despite the fact that he was only twenty-nine, he should be given the chance of running the business. That part of the discussion was equable enough, but when James suggested that Maggie should sell him George Harry's shares (now hers: she knew the terms of the will), she refused to countenance the idea. The discussion became quite heated, perhaps to the extent of starting Maggie crying again, so James changed the subject—but with the intention of bringing up the question of the shares at another time: maybe Maggie would be less adamant when she had got over the shock and had stopped thinking of herself as the custodian of George Harry's belongings, the inheritor of his responsibilities as well as his wealth. James knew that she had spoken to James Worrall—who was terribly cut up, poor fellow—and told him that as long as she lived, and wherever she resided, there would be a place for him among her staff; she had even reminded the coachman that on Friday week he was to go to a tailor in the town to try on a new livery.

Either James or Maggie raised the matter of Gorse Hall. Maggie said that she now loathed the place; in an odd sort of way, she felt that the house itself was partly to blame for what had happened. She could not continue living there, and intended to find another residence—somewhere near Silverdale, her birthplace, perhaps—as soon as possible.

Lastly, James mentioned the reward offered by the family (well, offered by *him*, actually, though when he had broached the suggestion to the police, he had taken it for granted that he was speaking on behalf of Maggie alone). It had not brought any result—which was rather surprising, for £100

was a very large sum. Think of it in terms of the £300 that was the entire weekly payroll of William Storrs Sons & Company. Without batting a swollen eyelid, Maggie said that the reward should be increased fivefold.

"The belief that the assassin is being harboured by someone living in the neighbourhood is entertained by the police authorities." So said the *Daily Telegraph*. But the reward of £500[9] did not persuade a harborer to have second thoughts; all that it did was increase the number of people who slunk into police stations and spoke of neighbors and acquaintances, even relatives, who were not going out so much lately, buying more groceries than before, or making what sounded like excuses for the sudden, unprecedented attraction of the home to ne'er-do-well husbands or sons.

On Monday, 8 November, the inquest was opened in the front room at Gorse Hall. It was a formality: the only witness was James Storrs, who said that there was no doubt that the dead man was his brother, and, answering a question from the coroner, Albert Fearns, claimed that he knew of no one who had "entertained personal animosity or feelings of revenge" against George Harry. Mr. Fearns adjourned the inquest for a couple of days "to give the police a chance to prosecute their inquiries."

About the time the inquest was starting, an unusually talkative detective was telling the several reporters of the *Chronicle*: "Something sensational will probably happen today."

But it didn't.

Friday, 12 November, was the day when James Worrall was supposed to go to the tailor to try on his new livery, but he did not mention this to his wife before leaving the apartment above the stables to start his morning chores: first, mucking

9. Which today would be close to £15,000. There are no figures for the internal purchasing power of the pound before 1914. The 1914 pound was worth approximately twenty-seven times more than the present-day pound; to put it another way, today's pound is worth about 3.5 pence compared with the 1914 pound.

out the loose-boxes and feeding and watering the horses, then, after cleaning himself up, going to Gorse Hall to collect the list of shopping that he had to get in the town. He returned to the apartment at about a quarter to ten, but just to pick up his canvas bag.

Sarah Worrall was extremely worried about her husband. Ever since the night of the murder, he had been acting most peculiarly. He would suddenly burst into tears; he became upset when he saw policemen near the stables; he hardly slept a wink at night.

Sarah got on with the laundry for Gorse Hall. At about noon, she became uneasy because her husband had not returned; she tried to comfort herself with the thought that he had said he might try to buy some poultry, so perhaps he was having trouble finding the dealer. By half-past five, the uneasiness had become alarm, and she sent one of her sons to fetch her brother, Tom Wood, from his home near Albert Square. When Wood arrived, he suggested looking in the stables. A Stalybridge constable was outside, and Wood asked him to help in the search. They found no sign of Worrall. The constable said that he was going back to the station, and would report that the coachman was missing.

Detective-Sergeant Albert Lee was at the station. When he heard about the disappearance, he at once went to the pubs the coachman frequented; but he could find no one who had seen him that day. Lee was worried. He had known Worrall for some years and had seen a lot of him since the murder, of course. Only the other day, he had asked Worrall some questions; the coachman had answered two or three, but then started crying; when he had recovered, he had told Lee that he could not sleep for thinking about the crime.

Lee walked up the drive to the stables. Knowing that they had been searched, he first looked in the outhouses. Then he went into the stables and shone his lamp around. Lying at the foot of the cat ladder to the hayloft were a jacket and a canvas bag. Lee climbed to the loft.

One end of a rope was knotted to a beam, and the other end was tied around Worrall's neck. His feet dangled twelve inches above a bale of hay. Close by was a ladder resting

against a crossbeam, and, as Lee put it when he was called as a witness at the inquest, "it was evident that Mr. Worrall had used this to accomplish his object."

Lee cut down the body. It was cold and stiff, and the sergeant, who had seen other bodies and knew something about the progress of rigor mortis, reckoned that Worrall had strangled himself at least six hours before. It was a wonder, he thought, that the head had not been wrenched off; perhaps it was because Worrall was such a tubby chap, with a large and fleshy neck.

Aided by the rope still tied to the neck, Lee managed to lower the body down the cat ladder. On the stable floor, he cut away the rope. Then he lifted the body as if it were part of the trunk of a tree and carried it out of the stables and up the steps to the apartment. Sarah Worrall was standing in the doorway. She did not say anything as Lee walked past her and, gently now, placed the body on the floor. Lee went out and told one of the constables guarding Gorse Hall to go down to the police station and report the suicide of James Worrall. Then he went back to the apartment and waited. Maybe more because he wanted something to do than because it was part of the routine of sudden death, he collected together the contents of the coachman's pockets. George Harry Storrs's pockets had been crammed, but there was not much in Worrall's: a watch and chain, a shilling and five pennies, and a penknife. No note explaining or excusing the suicide.

When William Leah heard about the coachman's death, he telephoned Superintendent Croghan. Could it be, he asked, that the suicide was a sign of guilt? For once, Croghan had anticipated one of the deputy chief constable's usually awkward questions. Most unlikely, he replied suavely; there was proof that Worrall was in the Grosvenor Hotel at the time of the murder, and anyway he bore no resemblance to the description of the murderer. Rubbing it in, Croghan added that, although the cook, when she first saw the intruder, had thought she was looking at the coachman, it was hard to believe that the two ladies and Eliza Cooper—and the cook, when she had got over the initial shock—could have failed to recognize a man who had been in and out of the house and

around the grounds for six and a half years. William Leah rang off without saying thanks.

"Miss Lindley's dash" was the part of the story of the Gorse Hall crime that captured the imagination of the public—at least, the people in and around Stalybridge; perhaps the tolling of the bell was the most evocative ingredient as far as outsiders were concerned.

Children had nightmares in which they ran through a dark tunnel but without getting any nearer the light that meant security; the talk in pubs usually came round to the bravery—or, as some thought, the cowardice—of the niece. And then someone recalled an interminable poem from schooldays: Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*: one stanza in particular. The six lines were reduced to four, the subject's sex was changed, a few more minor alterations were made, and soon people were reciting:

> Like one that on a lonesome drive
> Doth run in fear and dread,
> Because she knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind her tread.

Then someone made up a song, using a catchy tune of the time, which started off:

> Oh, Storrs was murdered—yes, *really* murdered. . .[10]

And there was another composition, this one sung to the tune of a mildly obscene soldiers' song:[11]

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10. Unfortunately, the rest does not seem to have been passed down.

11. Soon after World War I, the tune became well-known as the melody to the lyric:

> For the moon shines bright on Charlie Chaplin,
> His shoes are cracking
> For want of blacking,
> And his little baggy trousers wa-hant mending
> Before they send him
> To the Dar-dan-elles.

In T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) are the lines:

> O the moon shone bright on Mrs Porter
> And on her daughter
> They wash their feet in soda water

Miss Lindley's weeping
her heart away,
And tonight in the churchyard Storrs lies sleeping,
Miss Lindley's weeping
her heart away.

And tonight the moonlight shines on Gorse Hall mansion,
Where Storrs was murdered,
November third.[12]

The Gorse Hall case had been set to music, but the police had nothing to sing about for the first sixteen days of the investigation. But then, on the morning of Wednesday, 17 November, something happened five miles away, in Oldham: something that heartened the police no end.

In his notes on the poem, Eliot wrote: "I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken: it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia."

12. "Third" rather than the correct "first" so as to provide a sort of rhyme with "murdered."

CHAPTER THREE

THE ARTILLERYMAN RESERVIST

SOME TIME OR OTHER, FROM SOMEONE OR OTHER (James Storrs, perhaps?), the police had heard a name:

Cornelius Howard.

Of course, the police must have been given not just the name but a few details, too. There seems no way of finding out what these were, so it is necessary to provide facts about Howard's antecedents, assuming that the police were provided with some of them and found out the rest.

Cornelius Howard's birth certificate states that he was born on 11 October 1878 at Southport, the Lancashire seaside resort north of Liverpool.

The western side of the town, nearest to the golden sands and the sea, was dignified, a bit stuck-up. On fine days, the inhabitants and the many visitors promenaded on the pier that had been built in 1860, or if they didn't feel like walking, traveled the three-quarters of a mile to the end of the pier on the cable tramway and breathed in the ozone that the hydrotherapists asserted was good for the constitution. In the splendid Lord Street, running parallel with the beach, the shops, many of them given a visible touch of class by potted plants hanging over the windows, catered to the local gentry.

Farther from the sea was the old residential part of the town, not at all splendid but composed of bijou houses owned, or more often tenanted, by shop assistants, council workers, domestic servants who lived out. In the 1870s, one of the thoroughfares had a confused identity: most of the time it was called Hampton Road, but in 1878 it was known as Gerard Street. A corner-shop in the street was a butcher's, run by a migrant from Stalybridge, Ralph Howard, with help

from his wife Mary Anne, who was from the same town. According to Cornelius Howard's birth certificate, he was the son of this couple. They also had a daughter named Marion.

Little is known about Ralph Howard, but his wife was the much younger sister of William Storrs, who had made good as a builder and contractor, taken on many other business activities, built himself a fine house called Fern Bank in Stalybridge, and fathered three sons, James, George Harry, and William Henry.

In 1882, when Cornelius was four, the Howard family moved to Pendleton, a district of Manchester; whether Ralph Howard had his own shop there or was employed is not known. The Howards remained in Pendleton only for a year and then went back to Stalybridge, where Ralph took over an old-established pork butcher's shop in Melbourne Street, two blocks from the town hall. Ralph was noted for the excellence of his pork pies, and the shop became known—in contradiction of the words on the sign above it—as "Howard's pie shop."

Cornelius Howard attended, first, Ruth Hegginbottom's School near the town hall, then the Hob Hill School, on the right of the entrance to Gorse Hall. Seven was the maximum age for children at the latter establishment, so in 1885 he went to the Castle Hall School in Grosvenor Street. Two years later, to mark the Jubilee of Queen Victoria, the headmaster offered a prize of half-a-crown to the pupil with the best attendance record, and this was won (hands-down, so he afterward boasted) by young Cornelius—or "Corny," as he was known to his chums, one of whom later on characterized him as a "very decent lad, though a bit of a harum-scarum." When he was eleven or twelve, he passed the X-7th Standard examination and was sent to the Manchester Municipal Technical School for a year of "polishing up." It seems that either the technical school did not have a very technical curriculum or Cornelius decided that he was not mechanically-minded: his education completed, he joined Ralph Howard in the shop, and stayed behind the counter until soon after Mary Anne Howard's death on 28 December 1898. Then he packed a bag,

perhaps said goodbye to Ralph Howard, and set off to seek his fortune away from Stalybridge and butchering.

In November 1899, he was arrested on one charge of burglary and two of larceny at Douglas, on the Isle of Man; on the twenty-eighth of that month, the stern Manx magistrates sentenced the first offender to four months in prison, adding that he should do hard labor. Apparently, the short period in jail had no salutary effect on him, for in April 1901 he was again arrested for burglary, this time in Blackpool, where he got twice the sentence he had received the first time, once again with hard labor tacked on.

However, he must have made a deal with the military authorities (who, because of the Boer War, had stepped up recruitment), or they with him: saving himself from a gray prison uniform of broad arrows, on 12 April he donned a khaki uniform instead, as a private in the Royal Field Artillery. An army marches on its stomach, and Howard's pie-making prowess probably explains why he was recruited. Anyway, after enduring six weeks of drill at the Seaforth depot near Liverpool, he was posted as a cook to the 102d Battery, stationed at Portsmouth.

In January 1903, he embarked for Bangalore, where he joined the 12th Battery, which formed part of the largest British military cantonment in southern India. Twelve months later, one of the officers having learned that Howard was good at arithmetic, he was taken out of the cookhouse and employed as assistant pay sergeant, which meant a raise of half-a-crown a week. But shortly afterward he got into trouble: one night when he was on guard duty, some of his friends came back to the barracks with a barrel of beer, and he helped them drink it; he was confined to his quarters for fourteen days and stripped of a good-conduct badge. He did not lose his job in the pay office, however, and was still there in 1906, when he was appointed supernumerary acting-bombardier; after ten months, the "supernumerary" was deleted from his title, and he was awarded an extra 4 ½ pence a day. He was transferred to the 146th Battery at a base near Bombay, and in July 1907 was made a full-rank noncommissioned

officer; this meant that he got another 8 pence a day, bringing his weekly pay up to fifteen shillings and ninepence. His career received a further fillip when the battery pay sergeant died from cholera and he was given the job.

But for some reason, he decided to return to civilian life after eight years' service: it seems most unlikely that there was a connection between the decision and the fact that Ralph Howard died in February 1909, after bestowing all his worldly goods on his daughter. Cornelius returned to England and, with his character assessed as "very good," left the Royal Field Artillery and joined the reserve (on a pension of sixpence a day) on 12 April 1909. He probably had some money saved from his service pay.[1]

He traveled to Stalybridge and found lodgings. Supposing that he looked for a job, he did not find one. On 3 July, he made his way to Huddersfield, stayed there three days, then moved twenty-odd miles southeast to the cutlery and steel manufacturing city of Sheffield.

He had been there only six days when he was arrested for breaking into an ironmonger's premises with intent to steal. On Monday, 12 July, he appeared before the city magistrates under the name of "William Harrison"—which was what he had called himself when he was apprehended—and was remanded in custody until the following Wednesday, when he was further charged with breaking into a jewelry shop and stealing a glazier's diamond on 6 July (his first day in Sheffield); he was again remanded in custody, to await trial at the quarter sessions, which were nearly three months away.

He was in custody (all the time at Wakefield Gaol, except when he was brought before the Sheffield magistrates) *from Monday 12 July, until Thursday, 7 October,* when he was tried by the recorder[2] of Sheffield—who, perhaps considering that he had already spent rather a long while in prison, discharged him.

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1. In November 1910, he claimed that he left the army with fifteen pounds.

2. Recorders were the principal legal officers of cities and boroughs to which the right to have such officers had been granted; having to be barristers of at least five years' standing, they acted as judges of courts of quarter sessions and of borough courts of record.

Six days later, on 13 October, he was once again in the Sheffield magistrates' court on a shopbreaking charge; his "William Harrison" cover had now been blown and he gave his real name. No doubt taking a cue from the illustrious recorder—a King's Counsel, no less—the chairman of the bench gave Howard an unconditional discharge.

The local police had grown more than a little tired of him by now. As he left the court, probably looking either smug or surprised, it was suggested to him that he might like to try his luck somewhere else.

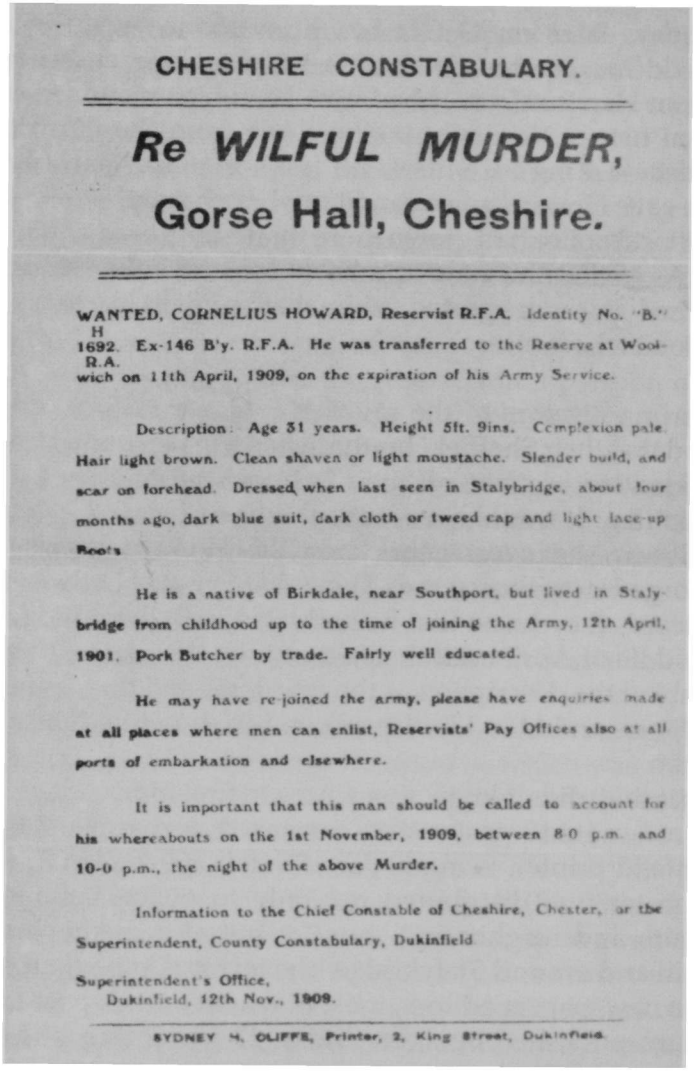
The investigators of the murder at Gorse Hall no doubt wished that their Sheffield brethren had not persuaded Cornelius Howard to move off their "manor" but had kept their eyes on him. It would have made things easier.

As it was, the investigators knew that Howard was related to George Harry Storrs; they knew that Howard had a criminal record; they knew that he had been in Stalybridge from the middle of April until the start of July; they knew that he resembled the description of the murderer and that, as far as Mrs. Storrs and Miss Lindley remembered, neither had ever met him.

What they didn't know was where to find him.

So a "wanted" poster was concocted and run off by a Dukinfield printer, using paper of a delicate shade of pink. The poster was distributed not only to police stations in Cheshire and neighboring counties but also to shops and pubs in and around Stalybridge; the text was typed out and sent to newspapers editors, most of whom found space for it in issues published between Friday, 12 November, and the following Monday.

Police Constable Ernest Schofield of the Oldham Borough police force was a brother of James Schofield, the Dukinfield constable who had itemized the contents of George Harry Storrs's pockets and the cuts in his clothes. Like his brother, Ernest had sleek black hair, but unlike James, he wore a mustache that he meticulously shaved in the center so as to give an almost nose-wide parting.



CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY.

Re WILFUL MURDER,

Gorse Hall, Cheshire.

WANTED, CORNELIUS HOWARD, Reservist R.F.A. Identity No. "B." H 1692. Ex-146 B'y. R.F.A. He was transferred to the Reserve at Woolwich on 11th April, 1909, on the expiration of his Army Service. R.A.

Description: Age 31 years. Height 5ft. 9ins. Complexion pale. Hair light brown. Clean shaven or light moustache. Slender build, and scar on forehead. Dressed when last seen in Stalybridge, about four months ago, dark blue suit, dark cloth or tweed cap and light lace-up Boots.

He is a native of Birkdale, near Southport, but lived in Stalybridge from childhood up to the time of joining the Army, 12th April, 1901. Pork Butcher by trade. Fairly well educated.

He may have re-joined the army, please have enquiries made at all places where men can enlist, Reservists' Pay Offices also at all ports of embarkation and elsewhere.

It is important that this man should be called to account for his whereabouts on the 1st November, 1909, between 8-0 p.m. and 10-0 p.m., the night of the above Murder.

Information to the Chief Constable of Cheshire, Chester, or the Superintendent, County Constabulary, Dukinfield.

Superintendent's Office,
Dukinfield, 12th Nov., 1909.

SYDNEY H. CLIFFE, Printer, 2, King Street, Dukinfield.

Fig. 8. The police "Wanted" notice. Courtesy of the Chief Constable of Cheshire.

At quarter-past five on the morning of Wednesday, 17 November, he was patrolling Renshaw Street, in the center of Oldham. He was just about to turn the corner into Middleton Road when something caught his attention: there were finger-marks in the heavy frost on top of the low brick wall that bounded the rear of the co-operative stores. Schofield turned

on his lamp and looked over the wall. A man wearing a cap, an overcoat, and a muffler was crouched by the back door of the co-op.

Schofield ordered him to climb back over the wall. The man obeyed, and the constable took him to the Werneth district police station.

On the way, Schofield asked him his name.

John Ward.

Local?

No.

Where from?

Huddersfield.

But at the station, when Sergeant Wheeler, who was on front-desk duty, asked the fair-haired, clean-shaven man his name, the reply was, "Cornelius Howard"—with the additional, unprompted information: "I am a pork-butcher."

The name rang a bell in the minds of both the sergeant and Constable Schofield. A copy of the pretty poster issued by the Cheshire Constabulary was tacked to the green-baize notice board by the desk.

Sergeant Wheeler told Howard that he was wanted in connection with the murder at Gorse Hall.

"I know that," Howard replied casually, "because I have seen it in the papers."

The two policemen searched him on the spot. They found in one of the pockets of his jacket a pair of black socks, saturated in what they were sure was blood. In addition to three penknives, they discovered an open knife: it had a black handle and appeared to be a table-knife with the blade ground to make it thin and sharp. The contents of other pockets suggested that Howard was a heavy smoker. Out of them came the following packets of tobacco:

a pound of thin twist;
half a pound of thick twist;
an ounce of flake;
an ounce of Player's Medium;
an ounce of Gallaher's.

Without being asked, Howard said that he had stolen the tobacco from Robert Taylor's shop in Oldham on the night of

15 November. Neither of the policemen cautioned him at this point, and it seems that he never *was* cautioned while he was at the station.

He was taken through to a cell and told to undress.

There was a deal of blood on the inside and outside of his jacket, and some splashes on his trousers and left boot. More blood was revealed when the trousers came off: this was on the outside of his left leg, just below the knee, where there were several lacerated wounds that appeared to be two or three weeks old.

Asked by the sergeant to account for the wounds, Howard said: "That was done by some glass falling on my leg in Joyce's lodging-house on 10 November." He amplified the statement by saying that the landlord of the lodginghouse was putting in some windows and dropped a pane of glass.

Sergeant Wheeler pointed out that Howard's other leg appeared also to be cut and that there was a bruise on the inside of the calf.

Howard wasn't having that: he insisted that the right leg was not cut but just dirty, and tried his best to rub off the marks.

The sergeant also observed a scratch, about three-quarters of an inch long, on the palm of Howard's right hand, but he doesn't seem to have commented on this; he noted, however, that it looked to be of the same age as the wounds on the left leg.

Howard was given a blanket to wrap round himself before being taken to the charge room, where he was asked to account for his whereabouts during the past couple of months.

After explaining that he was in Wakefield Gaol, awaiting trial on shopbreaking charges, from the middle of July to the end of the first week of October, Howard said:

"I went to Huddersfield about 16 October and stayed at Thomas Joyce's lodging-house in Lower Head. I went to Leeds for two days, returning to the same lodging-house at Huddersfield on 31 October, and I stayed there every night until 11 November, when I left and came to Oldham."

Howard was led back to the cell; after his clothes had been

taken away and a second blanket given to him, he was locked in.

Sergeant Wheeler telephoned one of his superiors, who telephoned William Leah, who, in turn, telephoned Superintendent Croghan.

Presumably, either Sergeant Wheeler or another policeman scouted round for some clothes for Howard. Anyway, he was fully dressed when he was taken to a cell in the basement of the Oldham town hall—which, as in Stalybridge, housed the central police station. At ten o'clock, he was led upstairs to the first floor: to the dock of the police court. A cube of a room, quite as high as it was wide, and looking like a miniature theater, on account of the galleries at the back and at the sides; the old-French motto of the Order of the Garter, *Honi soit qui mal y pense* ("The shame be his who thinks ill of it"), was blazoned above the bench, on each side of which were blindfold faces of Justice.

The magistrate had been told what to do. When the co-op charge had been read, also the tobacco-stealing one, and PC Schofield had said a few words, Cornelius Howard was remanded in custody and then handed over to the members of the Cheshire Constabulary who were in attendance. William Leah was among them, but the officer who dealt with the paperwork was William Brewster, the Dukinfield inspector who had talked to George Harry Storrs the morning after the window was broken in the front room at Gorse Hall, maybe with a gun.

William Leah had been driven to Oldham in the car that was his most recent perk as deputy chief constable of Cheshire. It was a blustery day, and no doubt the wind played havoc with his curlie-wurlie mustache as he marched down the steps of the town hall, followed by the close-packed trio of Brewster, the prisoner, and an unidentified policeman. Leah got in beside the driver, the three others crammed themselves in the back, and the car chugged off toward Dukinfield.

The bush telegraph worked in its usually, but still astonishingly, efficient way. By the time the car arrived at Du-

kinfield police station, the assembled members of the fourth estate had to use their elbows to stay at the front of a large crowd. The car was driven into the courtyard at the rear of the building, and, while several constables kept the spectators from following it, Leah jumped out and walked through the back door. Then Howard was escorted through the door and taken downstairs to one of the four cells in the whitewashed basement.

Leonard Croghan and other officers engaged in the investigation were at the station, and the next few hours were taken up by a conference, with Leah presiding. Strategy was mapped out, duties assigned.

One of the policemen at the conference was Detective-Sergeant Albert Lee, who surely must have felt that his personal involvement with people associated with the case was getting beyond a joke. He had known James Worrall, the coachman whose body he had discovered, for some years. And he had known Cornelius Howard even longer, for he had lodged at the home of Ralph Howard for about eighteen years; he remembered when Corny had joined the army, and had met him several times between April and the beginning of July 1909, when the young man was in Stalybridge.

A constable was sent to fetch Dr. John Summers Park, the medical officer of health for the town and the local police surgeon. When he arrived, he was taken down to examine Howard, who for the second time in about six hours was told to undress. The doctor found no wounds that Sergeant Wheeler had missed, and came to the same conclusion as the sergeant: that the wounds had been made some two or three weeks before—a period that included the night of the murder. In answer to a question from Inspector Brewster, who watched the examination, the doctor said that he thought it quite possible that the cuts on the left leg could have been caused if Howard had squirmed through a broken window (in the scullery at Gorse Hall, for instance). After the examination, Dr. Park was given the clothes that Howard was wearing when he was arrested; he took them back to his surgery and later reported on the stains, saying that there was no doubt that they were of blood, but whether human or animal blood he could not determine.

As soon as Howard had got dressed, Brewster took him upstairs to the interview room, in which there was a scrubbed table and two Windsor chairs. Before telling Howard to sit on one of the chairs, the inspector cautioned him. Then the questioning began.

The first question was about Howard's whereabouts at the time of the murder at Gorse Hall on 1 November.

"I was in Huddersfield at Joyce's lodging-house," Howard replied, "and I was not absent from there for more than half an hour between seven and ten that night. I went to the lodging-house on 31 October and remained there until last Thursday, and was never absent during that time. Mr and Mrs Joyce can speak as to my being there. I was in my own name."

Before Howard's arrest, the police had sought information about him from the military authorities, and had learned, among other things, that he had not drawn his reserve pay since 1 July. The inspector asked him to explain this, and was told:

"I was in Wakefield Prison on 1 October, when it became due. I was also there in the first week of September, when my identity papers should have gone in." Howard gave the dates of his remand and release, and mentioned that he was known at the prison as "William Harrison."

"When were you last in Stalybridge, and where did you stay?" Brewster asked.

"Last Thursday. I arrived about seven in the evening. I remained in Stalybridge a short time and then went to Ashton. I slept out that night. I did not see anybody in Ashton. I left about nine the next morning and went to Oldham, where I have been ever since."

"How do you account for the bloodstains on your clothing and boots, and the injuries to your leg?"

When asked much the same question by Sergeant Wheeler, Howard had said that some glass had fallen on him while he was at Joyce's lodginghouse; now, however, he gave a different explanation:

"A large piece of jagged glass dropped on my leg while I was smashing a window last Thursday night at Tansey & Walker's, the wholesale grocers near the town hall in Sta-

Fig. 9. Cornelius Howard, alias William Harrison.

lybridge. It was the office window inside the yard. I smashed it with a stone." Howard added, rather irrelevantly: "As to my black socks (the blood-saturated pair found in one of his pockets), I think I can find the man I bought them from."

Brewster broke off the interview for a few minutes. He went out of the room and asked a colleague to check two points: first, whether there had been a break-in at Tansey & Walker's (this was confirmed by the Stalybridge police, who had a report of a window being broken and a few coppers being stolen from a drawer); second, whether Howard, masquerading as "William Harrison," had really been in Wakefield Gaol from July to October (the answer from the prison governor was yes; just to make absolutely sure that remand prisoner Harrison was actually Cornelius Howard, the record card with portrait photographs pasted onto it was sent to the Dukinfield police).

By the time Brewster returned to the interview room, Howard had decided to admit two offenses in addition to the breaking and entering at the Stalybridge grocers. He had, he confessed, broken into the Huddersfield drapery shop of James Hopkinson on 30 October and stolen about a pound's worth of coins; and the next night (his first in Oldham, if his statement was true) he had entered the office premises of

Alfred Mellor Ltd., and taken some postage stamps and the overcoat and muffler he was wearing when arrested by Constable Schofield. He added that on 1 November he was wearing the cap, suit, and boots that were now being examined by Dr. Park.

Brewster asked a final question:

"Have you ever had a revolver since you left the army in April this year?"

The answer came firmly and without hesitation:

"Never."

During the previous fortnight, Mrs. Storrs, Miss Lindley, and the house-servants at Gorse Hall had attended three identity parades at Dukinfield police station and another in Stalybridge, but without recognizing any of the men arrested on suspicion: one of the men had been brought from Bury and another from Manchester, and the others were local "unsavory characters."

On the morning of Thursday, 18 November, the women were again driven to the Dukinfield police station.

William Leah, determined that everything should be done by the book, supervised the preparations for the parade. First of all, nine men who had been collected from the streets were lined up in the charge room, and Leah took a good look at them. He rejected one of them because he was dark-haired, stockier than the slim Howard, and a good many years older than thirty-one. Satisfied with the remaining eight (whose ages ranged from twenty to thirty-four and who were all of medium height), Leah arranged for those who didn't have caps to be provided with them. Then Howard was brought in. Leah told him to put on his cap and advised him that he could stand wherever he liked in the line.

Mrs. Storrs was ushered in, and Leah handed her a card on which he had written:

> Please look carefully at these men, and say whether you see any person that resembles the man you saw at Gorse Hall on the evening of 1st November 1909.

Leah asked Mrs. Storrs if she understood the words. She

nodded, and he told her to walk along the line. She did so, then walked halfway back. She indicated one of the men who had been rounded up in the streets. He was "something like" the murderer, she said. She took another look, then said: "No, he is not the man."

"Anyone else?" Leah asked. It was as far as he could go without breaking the rules.

Mrs. Storrs shook her head.

She was escorted from the room, and Leah told not only Howard to change his position in the line but the other men, too.

Marion Lindley entered.

Again, the card, the question.

She walked across to the line. "Almost at once" she pointed at Howard.

"That is the man," she said.

Mary Evans came next. After Marion Lindley's excellent showing, the cook was rather disappointing. She walked along the line, then retraced her steps. Eventually, after what must have seemed an eternity to Leah, she pointed, but uncertainly, at Howard. He was most like the murderer, she said—but she wasn't sure that he was the murderer.

The last of the four women was Eliza Cooper, the housemaid, who was almost as satisfactory as Miss Lindley. Showing no hesitation, she pointed at Howard. Unfortunately, what she said did not match the certainty of her action: "That is most like the man." Afterward, outside the charge room, she explained that Howard "seemed a little taller" than the murderer; but that she was sure she had picked the right man was shown by her subsequent comment: "He seemed to have a mustache that night."

Two other people had been brought along to see if they recognized the prisoner. One was a man called Alfred Dixon, who thought he had seen Howard in Hyde at ten o'clock on the morning after the murder. Though he identified Howard, it turned out that he was not at all sure of the date of the sighting in Hyde, so the police decided against adding his name to the list of people to be called at the committal proceedings.

The other eyewitness was Alice Doolan, who managed her father's thirty-six-bed lodginghouse in Boardman Street, Oldham. A young, fair-haired man with a slight mustache had come to the lodginghouse, which was known as "Jacques' place," between half-past ten and eleven o'clock on the night of 1 November. Mrs. Doolan had provided him with a bed, and he had left at about nine the next morning. A couple of hours later, Sergeant Goldbold of the local police had called, wanting to know if there had been any "strangers" at the lodginghouse the night before. The young man—Harry Fordham, he had called himself—came to Mrs. Doolan's mind, and she described him to the sergeant. Asked if he had blood on him or looked as if he had been in a fight, she said no, adding that there was certainly no blood on the sheets when she changed them.

Alice Doolan inspected the nine men on the identification parade, then pointed at one of them, saying that he was "very much like" her "single-nighter." It appeared that Cornelius Howard—alias William Harrison, alias John Ward—had, perhaps for only a moment or so, gone by the name of Harry Fordham.

A good morning's work, William Leah concluded: not only had Howard been identified as the murderer but his rough yet ready Huddersfield alibi had been weakened. Maybe Leah consulted Leonard Croghan; maybe he didn't. What is certain is that he thanked the eight Dukinfield men for their assistance and, as soon as Cornelius Howard was left alone and palely loitering, nodded to Inspector Brewster, who stepped forward, administered a second caution, then intoned:

"Cornelius Howard, I charge you that you did, on the first day of November 1909, feloniously, wilfully, and of malice aforethought kill and murder one George Harry Storrs against the peace of our Lord King."

There was a pause, implying to the accused man that he was expected to respond in some way. "I have nothing to say now," he replied. So he was taken back to his cell.

Considering that Colonel John Hamersley was the chief constable of Cheshire, he really should have had a telephone

at his country home. As it was, his deputy had to send a telegram advising him that Cornelius Howard had been charged.

That afternoon, a special court was constituted, with William Underwood, who was mayor of Dukinfield—and a justice of the peace, of course—on the bench. Cornelius Howard was let out of his cell, but instead of being taken up the stairs to the station, was escorted up the steep steps to the dock of the police court. The room was much less impressive than the Oldham court, more like a chapel than a theater: hammer beams straddled the ceiling, the walls were whitewashed, there were pitch-pine pews for the spectators, and the windows of pale-green glass, each decorated with the three-wheatsheaves emblem of the county, bestowed a patina like mildew upon the bench.

Now the reporters had their first real chance to attempt to describe Howard. The pen-portraits made him seem protean, so to save confusion it is best to quote just one at random. The correspondent of the *Dundee Advertiser* saw him as

> a middle-sized man, very fair in appearance. He has a white, sharp-featured face, topped by unkempt yellow hair, and his sunken, blanched cheeks and light-grey eyes give him a woebegone appearance. . . .
>
> His right hand lay on the desk in front of the dock, and his fingers worked nervously on it. His appearance betokened a weary man. His eyes were cast first at the magistrate, then at the roof. Again quickly they scanned the eager crowds of spectators who thronged the court.

The proceedings (which were watched by Mrs. Storrs and her niece, sitting behind the magistrate) did not last long. Inspector Brewster stepped into the witness box, told of how he had charged the prisoner, and then stepped out again. Whereupon William Leah rose and asked that Howard be remanded until Saturday afternoon— "at such an hour as will permit the inquest to be finished." Mr. Underwood agreed to this, offered Howard the opportunity of saying something, which was turned down, and ordered the police to keep him in custody at the station.

As has been noted, the inquest referred to by Leah had

Fig. 10. Photograph of Cornelius Howard sold as postcard.

opened in the front room at Gorse Hall. The coroner had sat twice more, but in the police court—first on Wednesday, 10 November, and again on the following Wednesday, the day before Cornelius Howard was charged. Robert Innes, George Harry Storrs's solicitor and friend, appeared—he did no

more than that—on behalf of the family. Leah's belief, that the inquest would finish on Saturday, proved overoptimistic. From then until 24 November, the public must have been rather confused by concurrent inquest sittings and committal proceedings; the same applies to some of the witnesses, who had to appear before both tribunals.

It would be pointless to relate both lots of testimony; the sensible thing, clearly, is to deal with them as if they were one, and to leave out some of the evidence that has already been detailed.

First, though, a few words are needed about the lawyers.

As soon as Howard was charged, it was Colonel Hamersley's duty to write to Sir Charles Matthews, the Director of Public Prosecutions,[3] at his office in the Temple, London, setting out details of the case so that the DPP could decide, first, whether proceedings should be continued, and second, whether he wished to assume responsibility for prosecution or to leave the Cheshire Constabulary, together with its legal advisers, to conduct the case. The DPP advised the chief constable to go ahead; he told him that, for the time being, he should deal with the matter, but that he, the DPP, would arrange for a lawyer to be sent up from London as soon as possible. So first Leah, then Croghan, looked after things until a solicitor called Seward Pearce arrived.[4]

Similarly, but for a different reason, Howard was at first represented in court by one lawyer, then by two others. Almost certainly, rather than Howard's seeking legal advice after he was charged, a young solicitor called Ralph Watts got in touch with him and offered his services without fee. Watts, the son of a doctor in Hyde, the town that straggled to the south of Dukinfield, had set up a practice in that town after

3. The first DPP was appointed in 1879 under the Prosecution of Offences Act of that year; his work was advisory, and the actual conduct of prosecutions was undertaken by the treasury solicitor. In 1884, controversy regarding the DPP's role led to the treasury solicitor's taking over the job, and this situation continued until 1908, when a separate Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions was established, the director being responsible to the attorney-general.

4. None of the newspapers gave any details about Pearce, but people with decent memories may have recalled that he presented the case for the prosecution at the widely reported committal of Samuel Dougal ("the Moat Farm murderer") in 1903.

being admitted a solicitor in 1899. Members of the legal profession were not permitted to advertise, but there was nothing to stop them from making sure that their names were mentioned, and spelled correctly, in newspaper reports of cases in which they were involved. Knowing that the prosecution of Howard would receive extensive coverage, not only in the local papers but in the national ones as well, young Watts felt sure that he could get more than enough hidden advertising for himself to justify working for nothing.

However, during the period of the police court hearings, either Watts decided that he was out of his depth as an advocate and therefore instructed counsel, or he was approached by two fledgling barristers who, for the same reason as his own, were prepared to defend a man who could not pay them. Watts handed over the visible defense—and still received mentions in the press as the behind-the-scenes solicitor.

Both barristers had chambers in Manchester. One of them—Percy Macbeth—played a relatively small part in the proceedings, though he may have advised on tactics.

The other barrister caused quite a stir.

Edward Theophilus Nelson, the son of a builder, was thirty-five years old. A graduate of the Oxford college of Saint John's—where he was president of the debating society, and got a 3rd in jurisprudence and a bachelor of arts degree—he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1902[5] and called to the bar two years later. But his name did not appear in the Law List until 1909—perhaps because in the intervening period following his call he was out of the country, visiting his parents at their home in Georgetown, Demerara, in the West Indian colony of British Guiana. The must surprising thing about Mr. Nelson—in terms of his being a barrister, at any rate—was that he was black. "Coloured gentleman" (to use the newspapers' delicate description) were a pretty rare sight in Eng-

5. The register of admissions notes that he was "admitted into the Society of this Inn on the twenty-ninth day of January in the Second year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord Edward VII by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, King, Defender of theFaith, and in the year of our Lord 1902, and hath thereupon paid to the use of the said Society the sum of Eight pounds twelve shillings and nine pence."

land, and colored *barristers* were very thin on the ground indeed. The first West *African* had been called to the English bar in 1879, and there were a few Indian barristers. Edward Nelson was one of the first, if not *the* first, West Indian to be allowed to wear a stuff gown in English courts.

He was clever; there is no doubt about that. But he had a fiery temperament that tended to tip him from belligerence toward petulance; and at times his behavior in court was, to say the least of it, out of keeping with the current forensic mode.

The Dukinfield court was nowhere near large enough to accommodate all the people who wanted to watch. Every day, a crowd formed outside at an early hour, and when the locks were drawn back on the door there was a rush—"unseemly," said one reporter; "ugly," said another— for the pitch-pine pews. Many of the people who were unable to fight their way in stayed outside, and made the most of morsels of news from constables who left the court for a smoke or just relief from the stagnant atmosphere. Of course, the largest crowds were there on the days when the star attractions, the four women from Gorse Hall, were appearing.

Marion Lindley was asked: "Have you had an opportunity of seeing the man who has been arrested?"

"Yes, I have," she replied. She didn't appear to be at all nervous.

"Do you see that man in court now?"

"Yes, I do."

"Where?"

"There—at my side," and she pointed at Cornelius Howard, who that day had been allowed to leave the dock and sit beside his counsel.

One of the reporters noted that "she could have reached out the accusing hand and touched him. Howard never changed his position, and except for a shadowy smile gave no indication that he realised the terrible nature of the accusation that had been made."

Howard was told to stand up, and then Marion Lindley was asked the all-important question: "You are positive that this is

the man who came to Gorse Hall on the night of 1 November?"

"I feel positive."

"Look at him."

"I feel positive," she repeated.

"And this is the man who was struggling with the deceased?"

A rather clumsily-worded question, that, but she understood the meaning. She said that she had no doubt, adding: "The only difference is that he had a slight mustache then, and now he is clean-shaven."

"Were you aware that Mr. Storrs had a cousin of the name of Howard?"

An oblique reply: "Well, if I had been asked I should have known, but I never thought of it."

"Have you ever heard his name mentioned by Mr. Storrs?"

"No."

"Nor by Mrs. Storrs?"

"No."

(The following morning, north-country people reading these last questions and answers commented that there was nothing unusual in the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Storrs had not mixed with their relatives, the Howards: they could think of examples of one branch of a family prospering while another stayed "at the bottom of the pile"—and of a "growing away" by both sides, with snobbishness and pride usually being the respective reasons.)

Eliza Cooper, the housemaid, was just as positive as Miss Lindley that Cornelius Howard was the culprit. "I feel quite sure," she said. She, too, noticed "a difference about the mouth—he seemed to have a mustache that night."

Then there was the cook. Although Mary Evans had eventually picked out Howard at the identification parade, she had been none too sure. Now, however, after some shilly-shallying about how the missing mustache had confused her, she said: "I feel convinced that he is the man." The strength of this statement was diluted a few minutes later when, replying to questions from the defense, she agreed that the intruder's

cap was well over his eyes and that she had not seen much of him "after that first glance in the kitchen."

Mrs. Storrs, on the other hand, though not expected by the police to assist their case, in the end gave it quite a fillip. Dressed in deep mourning, she was assisted into court by James Storrs and her niece. She kept her face averted from Howard as she stood in the witness box.

Asked about the identification parade, she said: "I never saw anybody who came on 1 November. I looked hard at two men, but I could not tell for certain."

"Did any bear any resemblance?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Was Cornelius Howard one?"

"Yes, he was one, and there was another—the second from the end, he was."

William Leah, a stickler for the truth, was worried by this answer. He was sure that Mrs. Storrs had seen only one man on the parade who she thought vaguely resembled the murderer: that man was not Howard. Leah had made a note at the time: "Mrs. Storrs— second man from end near door."

Asked point-blank whether Howard was the man who came to Gorse Hall on 1 November, Mrs. Storrs stared at the accused for some time. Then, speaking in little more than a whisper, she said: "The man had a slight mustache."

"Is Howard like the man?"

"Yes, but the man wore a cap."

She looked as if she were about to faint, and Marion Lindley hurried across the well of the court and administered smelling salts.

It seemed that she had recovered, so she was asked: "You only say that Howard is *like* the man?"

She turned to face the prisoner. She was sobbing as she cried out:

"I think he *is* the man. He knows."

Then she broke down.

The reporters scribbled: "Sensation in court." Which, for once, was probably apt.

Mrs. Storrs, who had earlier said that though she knew her husband had a cousin, she did not know his name, had never

met him, and could not remember George Harry's ever speaking of him, was assisted from the court by James Storrs.

James himself was something of a star turn—though not when be was giving evidence. Then he said that he had not seen the accused since the funeral of Mary Anne Howard, eleven years before, and that he was pretty sure that the same was true of his brother. He added that when he saw Howard in court, he did not recognize him until he got "a front view." As far as he was aware, George Harry had had nothing to do with the Howards—"except just speaking in the streets." He knew of no reason why Howard—or anyone else—should have attacked George Harry.

James created headlines by his actions during the committal proceedings. One day, while everyone was waiting for the magistrate to appear, he walked over to the dock and started chatting with Cornelius Howard. "For a couple of minutes the two were in conversation," a reporter observed. "Police officers looked on, apparently puzzled as to what to do in such unusual circumstances." At the end of the day, he again approached the dock—but William Leah, unsurprised this time, ordered him away. Howard smiled broadly as James apologized, saying that he did not want to do anything that was not right, and left the court looking sheepish.

Then, when Dr. Williams was giving evidence and finding some difficulty in explaining his idea of how the stabs in the back were inflicted, James jumped up from his seat and said to the witness, who seems to have been less astonished than everyone else: "I am about my brother's size—you are about the height of the assailant. Show us what you mean." The doctor walked across to James (who was four inches taller than George Harry, incidentally) and, quick as a flash, ducked under his outstretched left arm and thumped him three or four times on the back. James gave a there-you-are gesture and resumed his seat.

Although Dr. Williams gave evidence several times at both the inquest and the committal proceedings, he contributed nothing of much importance.

Dr. John Park, who had examined Cornelius Howard at Dukinfield police station and inspected his clothing afterward,

had by now come up with an explanation as to how someone might, in climbing through a broken window, cut his leg on the sharp edges but not tear his trousers: the trouser leg might ride up, leaving the skin exposed.

The only other medical evidence came from Dr. Joseph Carter Bell, the Cheshire county analyst. Howard's clothing and the large knife found in one of his pockets had been sent to the analyst for examination. Whereas Dr. Park had concluded that all the stains were of blood, Dr. Bell would say no more than that those on the trousers were, and that Howard's spare pair of socks were saturated with blood. He thought that the red stains on the jacket were of paint. Traces of blood, grease, and starch on the knife suggested to him that it had been used to cut meat.

As Howard had altered his story of how he got the cuts on his leg (first, glass falling on him in the lodginghouse in Huddersfield, then an accident when he was breaking the window at Tansey & Walker's), the evidence of Thomas Joyce, the owner of the lodginghouse, was rather redundant. Perhaps he was called as a witness to act as a reminder that Howard had given two disparate explanations. Anyway, Joyce scotched the original story by saying that, though it was true that he had replaced a pane of glass in a window on Thursday before the murder, and had put another pane in another window the next day, Howard was nowhere near on either occasion. Turning to the length of time Howard had stayed at the lodginghouse, Joyce said that he did not keep a register, only a daily note of the number of residents; he thought that Howard had first turned up at the beginning of October, and he knew that he had left on 10 November, but he could not say whether he was about the place on the day of the murder.

The evidence of William Wilson, a laborer who was at the lodginghouse during the time Howard was there, was slightly more relevant than Joyce's, for it tended to support Alice Doolan's statement that a man she believed was Howard arrived at her Oldham lodginghouse, only five miles or so from Gorse Hall, between half-past ten and eleven on the night of the murder. Wilson said that on Monday, 1 November, he never left Joyce's lodginghouse because he was "feel-

ing poorly"; he was sure that Howard was absent the whole day and did not return until Tuesday or Wednesday.

More to the point (or rather, *two* points: Did Howard stay in Oldham on Monday night? Did he have a mustache at that time?), James Ogden, a barrel-shaped barber whose own hairstyle was no advertisement for his proficiency, recalled someone very much like Howard, if not Howard himself, coming into his shop in West Street, Oldham—460 yards from the lodging house—at about ten o'clock on the morning after the murder and asking for a clean shave. The term "*clean* shave" denoted to Ogden that the young man wanted his mustache removed, and this he did. "It was a very slight light moustache," Ogden said in court, "and it was only distinguishable to anyone close to him." As is the way with barbers, Ogden had made conversation while he lathered and scraped. West Street was a "low locality" where many denizens had been in jail, and Ogden assumed that his customer had just been released. "How long have you been doing?" he asked politely. "I have not been doing time," was the reply.

Corporal William Harper of the Royal Field Artillery was brought all the way from London—from Woolwich Arsenal, to be precise—to say that Howard had had a slight mustache when he left the army in April.

(Still on the subject of Howard's upper lip, the baldness of which had been remarked upon by the women from Gorse Hall, early during the committal proceedings the police had the idea—bright, it seemed at the time—of denying him a razor so that a mustache might grow: then, the notion was, the eyewitnesses would all state unequivocally that he was the man. Sad to say, Howard's beard flourished but the mustache never progressed beyond a fuzz, so after a week or so he was provided with shaving tackle.)

Going back in time, soon after Howard made his first appearance before the magistrate, he asked to see William Leah and was taken to the office the deputy chief constable was using. He requested a sheet of paper and a pencil and then wrote a statement of an alibi that was different from, and more specific than, the one he had given originally. It ran as follows:

> On the night of 1 November 1909, I visited a public house called the Ring o' Bells in Huddersfield about 9 p.m. I was there until about 10:30 p.m. During that time I played the landlord of the house two games of dominoes for half a gallon of beer each game. There were three or four other men present at the time. I now wish that the said landlord be asked if he remembers me being in his house on the night of 1 November, and, if so, to come forward and give evidence to that effect, and also the other men who were in the house at that time. Three of the men were navvies, and as they had spent all their money and had not the price of their lodgings, the landlord gave them the price of their lodgings. The landlord gave them fourpence each and sent them to their lodgings. This was about 10:30, and I left the house about five minutes later.

The police had set about checking this new alibi, and had come up with two witnesses, one giving it a degree of support, the other flatly denying its truth.

First, there was James Davies, the stick-thin, ferret-faced landlord of the Ring o' Bells. He started off by saying that Howard had been in his pub several times—and that one night, in the presence of three navvies, Howard and he had played a couple of games of dominoes for "beer money".

Seward Pearce, the DPP's man, asked: "Can you fix the date?"

"Yes," Davies answered—"if I may be permitted to ask the prisoner a few words." He was just about to shout across the court when Pearce, shocked beyond belief, cried out:

"No! No!"

When the prosecuting solicitor had quite recovered, he asked: "Can you give the day of the month?"

"I have an idea of it," the landlord said, "because of having found lodging for the three men. I think it was 1 November, the same day that the voting was on."

Whispers rustled round the pews as the spectators realized that Howard's alibi had acquired tenuous support.

"Have you made a statement to the police?" Pearce inquired.

"Yes," the witness said blithely.

In answer to further questions, he said that the navvies had been in the Ring o' Bells "pretty well the whole of that day" and, before asking for money for their lodgings, had said that

they wouldn't mind sleeping with the donkeys in the shed behind the pub.

"You are perfectly clear that all this took place on 1 November, election day?"

A minute or so before, Davies had said that he *thought* Monday was the day. But his memory had inproved since then. "Yes," he said.

Pearce must have had a copy of Davies's statement in front of him, and it is impossible to understand why he did not read out one sentence from it: "It was November 1st or 2nd, and I cannot be sure whether it was the Monday night or the Tuesday night."

According to William Leah, Davies spoke to him after giving his evidence: "He said, 'I hope you don't think I am sticking to 1 November. It is not my intention to do so, because I cannot be certain of the day.'"

The next witness, John Robinson, a watch and clock repairer, was convinced that Davies was wrong about the date. He remembered being in the Ring o' Bells and seeing the landlord playing a game of dominoes for half a gallon of beer. He could not recall what the opponent looked like, but he did remember that several customers—"they looked like excavators"—watched the game and afterward spoke of sleeping with the donkeys. He was sure that it was *Tuesday, 2 November*, because he was not in the Ring o' Bells on Monday but in the Dog & Gun, two streets away. How could he be certain? Well, the Friday before, he had made a wager with someone that he had the right answer to a question concerning corn duty; a third party, known to Robinson simply as "the doctor," had held the stakes of fifteen pence a man. On Monday night, he went into the Dog & Gun, and while he was there read the answer to the corn-duty question in the *Huddersfield Examiner*. With the local paper proving that he had won the bet, he waited all night for "the doctor" to turn up. There was, he added, another reason why he had stayed in that particular pub: an "old maid" was present, and though he was not "keeping company" with her, he often engaged her in conversation.

CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY.

Chief Constable's Office,
Chester, 3rd February, 1910.

GORSE HALL MURDER, DUKINFIELD, CHESHIRE, 1st November, 1909.

PARTICULARS ARE REQUIRED as to the present whereabouts of the persons described below, in order that statements may be obtained from them in connection with the above-named Murder.

1st. Known by the name of Tom and "Snowie."
Age about 19 years. Height, 5 feet 10 inches.
Complexion, Fresh. Hair, Brown.
Weak Eyes, and wore small gold ear-rings.

2nd. Known by the name of "Pinchers."
Age about 35 years. Height, 5 feet 7 or 8 inches.
Complexion, Fresh. Hair, Brown.

No better description or further information can be obtained.

In the month of October last the above described men, who are out-door labourers or navvies, worked on the New Midland Railway, Huddersfield, and lodged at Sykes' Lodging House in that town until the morning of the 2nd November last, when both left the district.

No. 1 tramped to Wakefield and Doncaster, stating his intention of going to Cardiff, where his parents are supposed to reside, his father being employed as a labourer at the Docks.

No. 2 has not been heard of since his leaving Huddersfield.

THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF CHESHIRE would be obliged if careful enquiries could be made by the Police at public or other works where tramping labourers or navvies might find employment, and, in the event of the whereabouts of the two men, or either of them, being ascertained, a communication should be sent to this Office, when steps would be taken to arrange for an interview.

A copy of this has been sent direct to Superintendents of Divisions in County Forces.

Information to

THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF CHESHIRE, CHESTER.

Fig. 11. Police notice seeking whereabouts of witnesses. Courtesy of the Chief Constable of Cheshire.

On Wednesday, 24 November, the last witness gave evidence at the inquest, the coroner summed up, and a few minutes later the jury of tradesmen returned a verdict of wilful murder against Cornelius Howard.[6]

Since, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, committal proceedings of serious cases are a rubber-stamping activity prior to trial, it is usual for an accused person to reserve his defense rather than show his hand to the Crown. But Nelson, Macbeth, and Watts decided to call five witnesses when Seward Pearce had closed the case for the prosecution. One cannot help wondering whether their decision was influenced more by their desire for publicity than by a belief that Howard's cause would be served.

The evidence of four of the witnesses, all itinerants who had been at Joyce's lodginghouse in Huddersfield on 1 November, was cloudy and less than relevant; the testimony was not intended to prove that Howard was at the lodginghouse on the day of the murder but to show that William Wilson was not.

The other witness, however, was very important indeed.

William Marmaduke Thompson was tall, and thin above and below his pot-belly, making him pipette-shaped. The bulge around his midriff may have been caused by over-sampling of the tripe and fried fish and chips that he sold. Thompson, who was a bookmaker's runner in his spare time (which he seems to have had plenty of), stated that he had spent the all-important Monday—election day—helping at the headquarters of the Huddersfield North Central Ward Conservative Committee.

Just before he finished—between 8:30 and 9:30 P.M., he reckoned—he was standing in the doorway of the headquarters. Howard came up to him and said: "I see you're busy, Billy." Apparently Thompson was not on first-name terms with Howard, whom he had known since 15 October and had seen practically every day since then apart from Sundays, for

6. Not until 1977 was the power taken away from inquest juries to return a verdict of guilty against a named person in cases of murder, manslaughter, or infanticide.

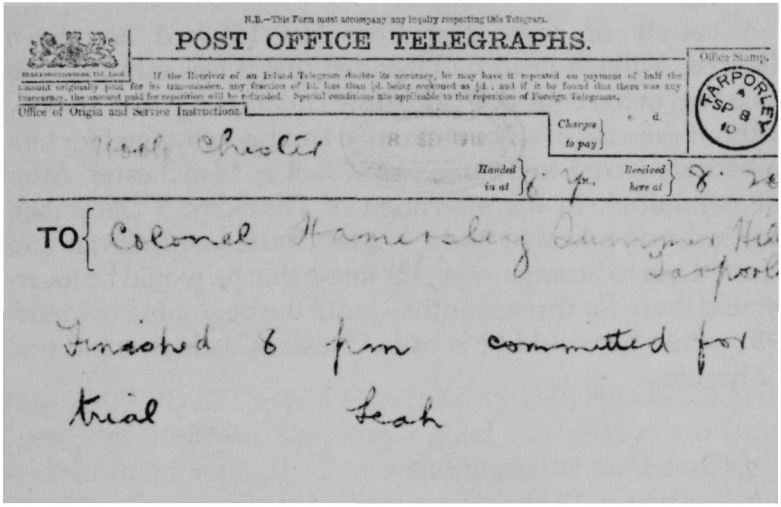
he replied: "Yes, Howard." There was a brief discussion about a betting transaction: Howard had put two shillings on a horse called Razorbill in a race at Wetherby, and the horse had won at odds of three-to-one. Thompson did not have the eight shillings on him, and said that he would pay Howard if he came to his house at noon the next day. Howard seemed satisfied with this arrangement and walked away. He collected his winnings on Tuesday. Thompson added that Howard was invariably clean-shaven.

After this evidence for the defense, there was the last of several "brushes" between Edward Nelson and Allen Howard, the Dukinfield solicitor who acted as clerk to the magistrate (and who was not related to the prisoner). At one of the early hearings, Nelson had objected—and quite rightly—to Allen Howard's advising the magistrates, pointing out that he had held a brief for the police at the inquest and might, therefore, be biased; the black barrister had pleaded vigorously, but William Underwood had refused to change clerks in mid-proceedings.

Now Nelson contended that the clerk's rendering of the evidence in the depositions was inadequate—downright misleading in places. Smooth as silk, the clerk retorted that the deposition were always read aloud so that any misstatements could be corrected or lacunae filled in. Mr. Underwood poured oil on troubled waters.

Allen Howard had the last word, though, by informing the magistrate that Nelson was *not* entitled to a last word on behalf of the accused. While Nelson was still fuming, the magistrates filed out to consider their decision. They returned in no time at all, and William Underwood announced that the justices considered that there was a *prima facie* case to answer.

Considering that Cornelius Howard had already been committed for trial on a coroner's warrant, the decision in the police court created little or no interest. The talking point about that time, in Stalybridge at least, was George Harry Storrs's will. A rumor had rippled through the town that Cornelius Howard was a beneficiary; but the terms of the will, made known during the last week of the committal proceedings, showed the story up as just another fabrication.


N.B.—This Form must accompany any Inquiry respecting this Telegram.

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.

Office Stamp.

If the Receiver of an Inland Telegram doubts its accuracy, he may have it repeated on payment of half the amount originally paid for its transmission, any fraction of 1d. less than ½d. being reckoned as ½d.; and if it be found that there was any inaccuracy, the amount paid for repetition will be refunded. Special conditions are applicable to the repetition of Foreign Telegrams.

Office of Origin and Service Instructions

Charges to pay

Handed in at

Received here at

TO Colonel Hamersley

Finished 6 pm committed for trial

Leah

Fig. 12. William Leah's telegram to Colonel Hamersley after Howard's committal for trial. Courtesy of the Chief Constable of Cheshire.

The typewritten document, which could hardly have been briefer, had clearly been written to the recitation of Robert Innes; it was exact in its wording, and sans legal loopholes:

> This is the last will and testament of me, George Harry Storrs, of Gorse Hall, Stalybridge, in the county of Chester, managing director of William Storrs Sons & Co. Ltd., builders and contractors of Stalybridge. First, I direct my just debts, funeral and testamentary expenses to be paid, and subject thereto I give, devise and bequeath unto my wife, Mary Margaret Storrs, her heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, all my estate and effects, both real and personal, for her own use and benefit absolutely, and I appoint my said wife sole executrix of this my will.

There was a handwritten codicil stating that, in the event of his wife's dying before him, his shares in the company should go to James Storrs's children and the rest of his estate to Marion Lindley. But this was not signed, and so would have been inoperative.

The estate was valued at £28,362 (close to three-quarters of a million pounds in present-day terms), with net personalty of £22,316. Mr. Storrs, it was commented by Stalybridgians, was not short of a few bob.

A couple of days after Cornelius Howard had been charged, William Leah had decided that it was inhumane to keep him in the cramped cell below Dukinfield police station, without exercise or sight of the sky, and had arranged for him to be transferred to Strangeways Gaol in Manchester. After the committal, in the afternoon of Thursday, 9 December, Howard was taken by train to Manchester and driven in a Black Maria to Strangeways. He knew that he would be incarcerated there for three months—until the beginning of March 1910, when he would be sent to Chester Castle to stand trial for his life.

CHAPTER FOUR

A TRIAL

THE WALLED CITY OF CHESTER, AT THE HEAD OF THE estuary of the River Dee, has a good many claims to fame apart from the walls: the Tudor buildings; the cathedral; King Charles's Tower, so called because Charles I is said to have watched from it the defeat of his forces after the battle of Rowton Moor; the Rows of double-decker shops; the horse-racing track on the Roodee. And the castle.

There has been a castle on the site close by the river since soon after the Norman Conquest. The castle is mentioned in footnotes to history books as the place where Richard II and the Earl of Salisbury were taken as prisoners "mounted on two little nagges not worth 40 francs." But more to the point of this story, there has been a court of justice in the castle since 1538.

In 1903, one of the ubiquitous statues of Queen Victoria—more often the crowning glory of public conveniences—was erected in the ample forecourt; the Queen had her back to the imposing entrance to the two assize courts.

Rex v. *Howard* had dawdled its way from the theater-like court at Oldham to the chapelesque one at Dukinfield, and now finished up in the baroque palace that was Court Number One for the County Palatine of Chester. A vast quarter-sphere, with the judge's bench against the flat wall; Corinthian columns all the way round, panels of light-brown timber on the walls, the same sort of timber used for the furnishings, the curved ceiling overcrowded with ornate, many-coloured lozenges. Impressive.

The winter assizes began on Tuesday, 1 March. Two judges

presided, Lord Coleridge[1] being responsible for civil cases, Mr. Justice Pickford being the "red judge" for criminal ones.

The latter was a round-shouldered but immensely tall man;

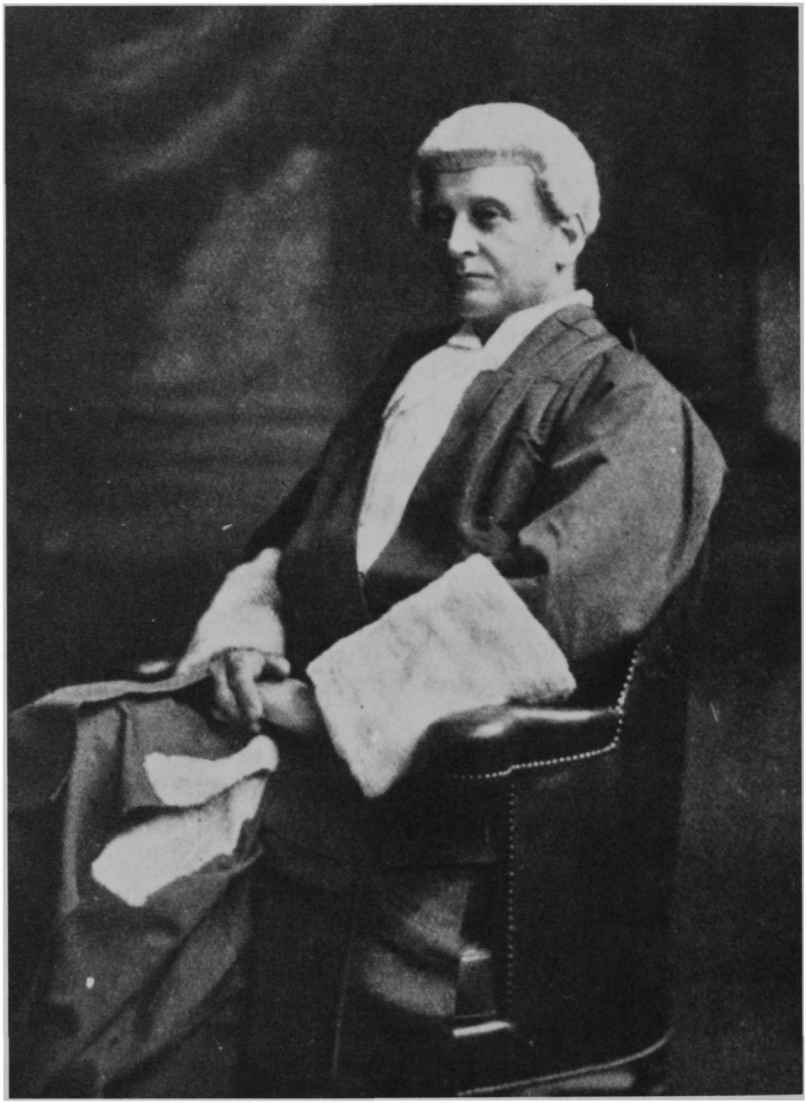


Fig. 13. Mr. Justice Pickford.

1. Uniquely, his grandfather and father (Lord Chief Justice of England, 1880–94) were also judges.

he had eyes like sultanas, an angular nose, a square jaw. Called to the bar in 1874, he had practiced in Liverpool[2] until 1892, when he moved to London and soon afterward took silk. Pickford's most sensational case as a barrister occurred in 1889, when he defended the American Mrs. Florence Maybrick on a charge of murdering her husband with arsenic; he was her sole representative at the committal proceedings, and was led by Sir Charles Russell at the assizes. Mrs. Maybrick was found guilty and sentenced to death, but was reprieved and spent fifteen years in prison—for a crime that some people believe she did not commit.

Appointed to the King's Bench in 1907, when he was fifty-nine, Pickford had come to the notice of the public as a judge only a few months before the trial of Cornelius Howard, when he had presided over a libel action brought by Cadbury's, the Quaker-owned chocolate firm, against a newspaper that had published an article contrasting the welfare benefits enjoyed by workers at the company's factory at Bourneville, near Birmingham, with the "conditions of slavery" on plantations in Portuguese colonies that supplied Cadbury's with cocoa beans; the jury found the libel proved, but assessed damages at the contemptuous figure of a farthing.

At Chester, speaking to the twenty-three members of the grand jury[3] on the first morning of the assizes, Mr. Justice Pickford observed that this was the first time he had had the honor of being in the county as judge. He remarked that there was "about the usual number of prisoners" and that most of the offenses were "very ordinary." The calendar contained thirty-two cases: assault with intent to rob, 1; indecent cases, 6; bigamy, 1; burglary, 2; concealment of birth, 1; counting-house breaking, 3; giving false information to a registrar of

2. Readers with an interest in the Wallace murder case of 1931 may be intrigued to know that Pickford's first chambers in Liverpool were at 22 North John Street, right next door to the building which later housed Cottle's City Cafe, where the telephone call which lured William Herbert Wallace away from his home was received.

3. A bill of indictment had to be laid before a grand jury of from twelve to twenty-three persons, a procedure originating in the assize of Clarendon, 1166. With the exclusion of certain cases, mostly to do with offenses committed abroad by government officials, grand juries were abolished in 1933; they were done away with altogether in 1948.

marriages, 2; warehouse breaking, 2; housebreaking, 2; larceny, 8; personating, 1; shopbreaking, 1; horse stealing, 1; murder, 1.

Referring to the last-itemized case, the judge said that although the murder at Gorse Hall was "somewhat peculiar in some of its features," it was not one that need give the grand jury any trouble; he believed that they would have no doubt that there was sufficient evidence to establish a *prima facie* case against the prisoner.

And that was how it turned out. The grand jury returned a true bill against Cornelius Howard (in effect, committing him for trial for the third time), and Mr. Justice Pickford said that he would take the case on Thursday.

Thursday, 3 March

There was a large crowd outside the court hours before the doors were opened at ten o'clock. The crush had been anticipated, and the javelin men[4] were reinforced by a contingent of policemen; not only the main entrance but side doors were guarded. Comparatively few of the would-be spectators gained admittance; most of the unlucky ones, including many people who had traveled from Stalybridge and Dukinfield, waited outside the castle all day.

"Ladies of the High Sheriff's party" filled the grand jury's seats. The six seats reserved for the press were insufficient, so extra accommodation was found, and all the reporters—

4. An Act of Parliament of 1661 required English high sheriffs to provide twenty javelin men, and Welsh ones to provide twelve, to keep order at the assizes; this requirement was revoked by an Act of 1859 that ordered chief constables to depute policemen to do the job: however, some of the more affluent high sheriffs continued the tradition, enlisting javelin men from their tenants or employing former soldiers or retired policemen. The javelin men last appeared in Chester in 1924; in some other counties, they appeared at assizes until the outbreak of World War II.
Writing at Carlisle on 21 August 1778, James Boswell described the arrival of the assize judges from Newcastle-upon-Tyne: "It is the custom for the High Sherif to ride to ——, seven miles from the town, to meet the judges; and he is accompanied by as many Gentlemen as chuse to attend him. Formerly, and till within these few years, He used to go to the extremity of the County. The Sherif has as many servants of his own as he chuses to bring, and his friends send every one a servant. These used formerly to be drest in the Sherif's own livery, so that there were new liveries every year, which was a great expense. But now one livery serves year after year till the clothes are worn out."

twenty-four of them, according to one who counted the others—managed to find space. But they were not at all comfortable. The reporter for the local paper, the *Chester Chronicle*, who was used to plenty of elbowroom, complained bitterly about the cramped conditions:

> The atmosphere of this court was as usual hot and impure, and anyone who particularly desires to acquire headache and indigestion should try sitting in an assize court for a day when a large crowd fills it.

Mr. Justice Pickford, attended by the high sheriff[5] and the chaplain, took his seat at ten minutes past ten, and finished off a case that had been carried over from the previous night.

Half an hour later, counsel and solicitors in the Gorse Hall case filed into the well of the court.

None of the barristers had acquired celebrity. Though Francis Williams, the tubby, silver-haired man who led for the Crown, was a King's Counsel and recorder of Cardiff, he was not well-known outside legal circles. His junior, Ellis Ellis-Griffith, who was recorder of Birkenhead and Liberal Member of Parliament for the Isle of Anglesey, seems never to have been involved in a widely reported case.

Cornelius Howard was no longer represented by Edward Nelson and Percy Macbeth. Either the publicity they had obtained from the committal proceedings had brought in plenty of briefs, making them unavailable for the trial, or Ralph Watts had been persuaded to instruct a more experienced barrister in the person of Trevor Lloyd. Mr. Lloyd's stuff gown may have shown signs of wear, but he was not renowned. He led Austin Jones, who had even less experience than Nelson: the son of the rector of Hope, he was just twenty-five and had been called to the bar only two years before.

The spectators, and others in court, must have been a trifle confused at times, because Francis Williams, the sixty-four-

5. High sheriffs are said to be the oldest secular dignitaries under the Crown; the word "sheriff" derives from "Shire-reeve," or officer of a county.

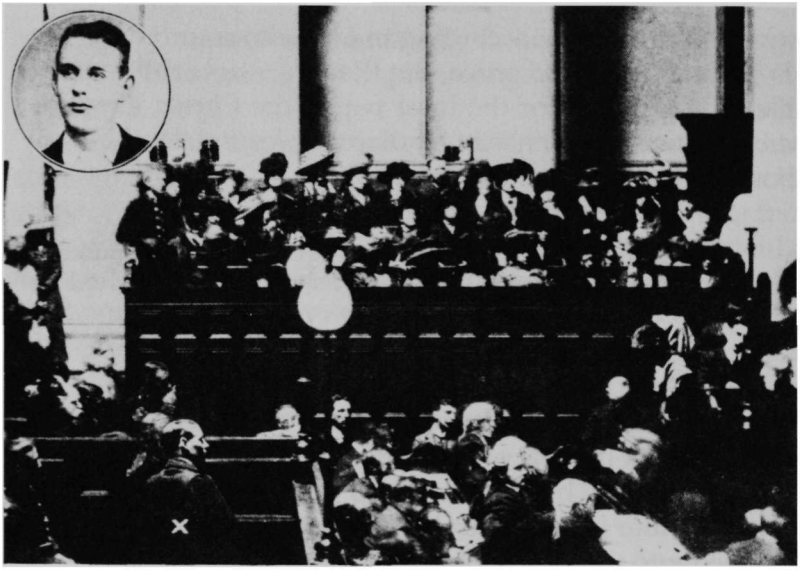


Fig. 14. The scene during Howard's trial.

year-old prosecutor, and Trevor Lloyd, counsel for the defense, looked like twins beneath their wigs. But their approach to their respective tasks told them apart: Williams, cold and incisive, was a textbook representation of Crown counsel, seeking to elucidate the facts rather than gain a conviction; Lloyd, whose singsong voice betrayed his Welsh upbringing, was always on the lookout for a chance to mint drama from the evidence.

Two warders brought Cornelius Howard up the steps to the dock. He wore a black suit, with a white collar and black tie. A prison diet seemed to agree with him: he had put on thirty pounds since his arrest. As he moved to the front of the dock, he put his hands in his trouser pockets, squared his shoulders, and took a long look round the court. When the clerk of arraigns read the indictment, Howard replied, "Not guilty," in a loud (one reporter thought "defiant") voice. While the members of the jury were being sworn, he paid close attention to the twelve men. Then one of the warders nudged him, and he sat down.

The case for the prosecution was almost a replica of what had been heard at the committal proceedings.

Almost.

After Francis Williams had made the opening speech—an unornamented recital of the evidence, given in a quiet voice not always easily heard by the spectators, but rising a few decibels at the end to indicate a peroration, "I am sure that you will weigh the evidence carefully and properly, and will not shrink from doing your duty"—the borough surveyor of Dukinfield entered the witness box to explain plans he had drawn.

Then James Storrs was called. Only in reexamination did be say anything that he had not said before: "I do not believe the attack of 10 September, when the window was broken, has any bearing on that of 1 November, in my own mind."

Pleased with that, Mr. Williams called Mary Evans, the cook.

"Who is the man you saw on the night of 1 November?" he asked.

Mary Evans turned to the prisoner, who sat with his arms folded. "That is the man facing me," she said.

In cross-examination, Trevor Lloyd asked: "Was anyone else present when you gave a description of the attacker to the police?"

"Miss Lindley."

"I suppose you have discussed the matter together?"

"Only the housemaid and I. We have talked about nothing else scarcely."

"Is it by the eyes you fix your identification chiefly?"

"No, but I noticed they were peculiar."

"You have seen other blue eyes, I suppose?" .

"Many."

"Can you tell me anything remarkable about the attacker's eyes?"

Ignoring the way Lloyd treated the murderer and the prisoner as different people, the cook said: "I cannot say what it is, but there is a peculiarity. They seemed rather wide apart. I have not noticed other persons' so much."

"Did you notice anything further about the man?"

"He had very shallow cheeks."

"But there are many shallow-cheeked people in the world?"

"Oh, yes, there are."

"Anything else peculiar?"

"Nothing I can think of."

Apparently for the first time in any of the proceedings, the dead coachman was mentioned. "Had you a good many conversations with Worrall about this affair?" Lloyd asked.

"Well, he seemed so bothered that we could not say much to him."

"So bothered that he committed suicide on 12 November?"

"Yes."

Reexamining, Francis Williams asked: "Have you any doubt now that the prisoner is the man who was in the house?"

"No doubt at all."

The judge interrupted: "It is said that you hesitated at first at the identification parade. How long did you hesitate?"

"Only a few seconds, my Lord."

A final question from Mr. Williams: "When you saw the man in the kitchen at Gorse Hall, was he standing up or not?"

"Well, he was sort of standing and leaning towards the right."

Eliza Cooper, the housemaid, was the next witness. Asked whom she picked out at the identification parade, she said, "Cornelis Howard," and pointed at the prisoner.

"Are you sure that he is the man you saw at Gorse Hall?"

"Yes."

Rising to take up the questioning, Mr. Lloyd noted: "You said before the magistrates, 'The whole thing occurred like a flash.' Do you say that now?"

"Yes."

"And you were spellbound?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Do you attach great importance to the eyes of the man you saw at Gorse Hall?"

"Yes."

"Is that the main way you identify the man?"

"No; by his face altogether."

Back to the coachman: "Did Worrall have any idea who the man could be who had been in the kitchen?"

"No."

Lloyd persisted: "He had none?"

"No, sir."

Probably resisting the temptation to curtsy, the housemaid left the box.

Now a murmur drifted round the court as Mrs. Mary Margaret Storrs was called. Still dressed in deep mourning, she entered on the arm of her brother-in-law. She looked distressed, and the judge suggested that she should sit down, which she did.

Francis Williams asked: "Do you see the man from whom you took the pistol on the night of 1 November?"

Mrs. Storrs was overcome with emotion. Her lips quivered and she sat back for a few moments. Then:

"Cornelius Howard, I suppose."

"Do you see him now?"

With what seemed like a great effort, Mrs. Storrs turned toward the dock. She was shuddering violently as she said:

"There is the man."

She sobbed and her breathing became heavy.

Howard's expression did not alter. He watched Mrs. Storrs closely.

Now it was Trevor Lloyd's turn. He took care not to badger this witness but made equally sure that he got the answers he wanted.

"You said that on 1 November the man looked like a workman?"

"Yes."

"And you thought he might be a discharged workman who had a grudge against your husband?"

"Other people thought so, but I always said our own people would never do it."

"But you yourself said, 'My idea was that he might have a grudge against my husband for being discharged'?"

"Yes."

"You said you were uncertain about two men in the parade at Dukinfield station?"

"Yes."

"I understand you picked out one man in preference to the prisoner?"

"Yes."

"Did you say, 'That is the man most likely'?"

"That was perfectly true at the time, but I have lived a long time since then."

Mrs. Storrs was still sobbing slightly as she left the court, assisted by James.

Marion Lindley followed her aunt into the witness box. She had lost none of her certainty that Cornelius Howard was the murderer.

"Who was the man?" Francis Williams asked her.

"The prisoner who is sitting in this court now."

"Have you any doubt whatever that he is the man?"

"I have no doubt. I am positive."

After a few more questions, Mr. Justice Pickford pointed to the massive clock, which read 1:30, and called an adjournment for half an hour.

When the trial resumed, Marion Lindley underwent cross-examination by Trevor Lloyd, who started off almost conversationally:

"On that night you were naturally very terrified?"

"Yes, I was."

"And you were the first out of the house?"

"That's right—I was the first to leave."

"When you came out of the dining room, perhaps you were too frightened to see really, but can you tell me the position Mr. Storrs and the intruder were in?"

"They immediately closed or gripped each other."

"Had the man you saw a cap on his head?"

"At first it was on his head, then it was thrown further back."

"You've discussed this incident?"

"Yes—but I am not guided by anyone else."

Lloyd's tone changed: "You formed your own opinion, and you do not care what anybody else says about the matter. You stick to it?"

"Yes."

"You glanced for a second, and could tell the man's eyes again?"

"Yes, I should know him anywhere."

"Are you a person who observes faces?"

"I do observe, yes."

"But not when you are terrified and first out of the house for assistance?"

"Yes."

Lloyd looked at the witness for a long moment, perhaps wondering whether to ask further questions, then sat down.

The defense received an unexpected bonus from William Leah, who was called to give evidence about the identification parade and Howard's statement that he was in the Ring o' Bells on the night of the murder. Cross-examining, Lloyd said: "When the identification was taking place, Mrs. Storrs went in first, and she said that the second man was most like the culprit but was not him?"

"The note I made at the moment is here. It reads, 'Mrs. Storrs—second man from end near door.'"

The judge intervened: "Then she picked out the wrong man?"

"In the room she did not say a word. Afterwards she only mentioned one man. That man was not Howard."

"She says she mentioned two."

"She did not, anyhow," Leah said flatly.

When Trevor Lloyd was allowed to continue the questioning, he asked Leah about the games of dominoes at the Ring o' Bells: whether the police had tried to ascertain the night when they took place. The deputy chief constable said that the police had searched for the navvies and that one had been traced.

Now Lloyd ran into difficulties in framing a question without breaking the hearsay rule.

First of all, he asked: "What day did the navvy say it was?"

The judge ruled this out.

Lloyd tried again: "Did you find a man named Gibson who was one of the navvies?"

No comment from the bench.

"Yes," Leah answered.

"And have you, in consequence of your inquiries, found out whether or not it was 1 November that he was there?"

Mr. Justice Pickford was not having that. It was, he said, the same improper question in a different form. He was not at all sure, but he thought counsel might ask the witness if he had found that the prisoner's statements were correct.

"Well, I may put it in that way," Lloyd said. To the witness: "Having seen Gibson, have you found that prisoner's statements were correct?"

But no, he still hadn't got it right. "That is not what I said," the judge snapped. "What I will allow is, 'Have you made inquiries, and have you ascertained whether prisoner's statement is correct?'"

Trevor Lloyd gave up, saying that "the police in all probability will say no, because there are two sides to this question."

After William Leah, a few more witnesses were called—members of the Stalybridge Liberal Club, policemen involved in the investigation—but their evidence added nothing to what we already know.

At twenty minutes past five, Mr. Justice Pickford and his retinue rose; he bowed, and everyone bowed in return. As soon as the judge had disappeared, the people who had sat through the long day hurried from the castle and sought out the nearest pubs or went back to their homes or hotels, or, in the case of the reporters, scouted around for vacant telephones. All except Cornelius Howard and the two warders, of course; they returned to Strangeways.

People arrived outside the castle at an even earlier hour on Friday morning, and there was a larger crowd when the doors were opened at ten o'clock.

Ten minutes later, when Mr. Justice Pickford entered the court, there was still some shifting, bumping, and whispering in the gallery as spectators tried to ease their discomfort on the long wooden benches.

Cornelius Howard entered the dock.

This was the most important day of his life: he knew that later on he would be told to go to the witness box; he knew that sometime afterward the jury would decide his fate. But, according to one report, "he carried himself in the manner of

a military man as he crossed the dock, and, having sat, immediately fell into the lounging attitude which he kept throughout the previous day."

The first prominent witness was Alice Doolan. She started off well as far as the prosecution were concerned, but rather let them down in the end. In examination-in-chief (direct examination), asked if she saw the man who had stayed the night of 1 November at her lodginghouse in Oldham, she pointed at Howard, saying, "There he is." But Francis Williams broke one of the golden rules of advocacy, "never put a second question if it isn't necessary," by asking, "Have you any doubt as to whether the prisoner was the man who was at your house?" "Well, he is very much like him," Mrs. Doolan replied.

An odd incident relating to Howard's stay at the *Huddersfield* lodginghouse occurred about half an hour later. Edward Neville, a deputy at Joyce's, was called. There was no sign of him, so his name was shouted again. And then a third time. A search was made but he could not be found. On the application of the Crown, the judge ordered that Neville's recognizance should be estreated. "Do you know why he has gone away?" Mr. Justice Pickford asked Francis Williams.

The prosecuting counsel said that he had no idea. But Trevor Lloyd got up to throw a chink of light on the Mystery of the Disappearing Deputy: "He was missing from the common lodging-house from a week last Thursday."

"No particular reason for his not being here?" the judge inquired. "Simply that he has gone away?"

"We know of none," said Lloyd.

"He is not a very important witness."

"No, my Lord," Williams agreed.

The next witness, James Davies, *was* important. Asked in examination-in-chief whether he remembered a man called Robinson being at his pub, the Ring o' Bells, on the night of the domino contests, Davies said: "I thought so at the time."

"What do you say now?" asked Mr. Justice Pickford—who, as the trial progressed, interposed more often, unmindful of Lord Bacon's dictum that "an over-speaking judge is no well-oiled cymbal."

"Well, I cannot tell you right," Davies replied.

"You said you thought so. Do you think so now?"

"No, I don't."

Allowed to carry on, Williams asked: "What day was it?"

"It was a Monday."

The judge again: "Are you sure it was the Monday?"

"Yes, certain—the same night as the voting was."

Mr. Justice Pickford nodded to Williams to continue.

"Have you always been sure it was 1 November?"

"Yes."

Yet again, the judge broke in: "Have you told the police you were not sure whether it was the 1st or 2nd?"

"No, not to tell them straight out."

"Did you say you were not sure whether it was the 1st or 2nd?"

"I didn't say anything about that," Davies lied.

Williams, who must have been getting tired of bobbing up and down, asked: "What time did Howard come in on that day?"

"Close on ten at night."

After a few more questions and brief replies, Williams asked to be allowed to treat the landlord as a hostile witness. Mr. Justice Pickford, while refusing, commented: "It is perfectly obvious that the man wishes to give you as little information as he can. He is not giving his evidence as a man ought to do."

While Davies was still in the witness box, Detective Inspector William Pierce, the officer from constabulary headquarters who had taken a statement from the publican, was called so that he could be identified by Davies. At that moment, a reporter for one of the London newspapers was returning to his seat ("from which he had been called momentarily," as a reporter for another paper delicately put it), and Williams caused some amusement to the spectators and embarrassment for the newsman by mistaking him for the detective. Then Pierce arrived, and Davies rather reluctantly agreed that he recognized him.

Cross-examined, the landlord said that he did not know the names of the navvies who watched him playing dominoes

with Howard, but that he would know them if he saw them. So Frederick Gibson was called. "Just look at that man," Lloyd said to Davies. "Was he one of the men in your public house?"

"Yes," Davies replied, "he is a man I gave lodgings to that night."

Williams did his best to reexamine, but the witness was just as unhelpful as before. Eventually, Mr. Justice Pickford snapped: "You behave yourself, sir! You will answer that gentleman as civilly as you answered that one"—indicating defense counsel.

But Williams decided that there was no point in trying again.

As soon as Davies had left the box, John Robinson, the clock-mender with an interest in corn duty, was called. The prosecution's hope that he would nullify Davies's testimony was dashed when he wavered into the court and had the greatest difficulty in finding where he was supposed to go and in repeating the oath; it was clear that he had had more than a few drinks too many.

He gave slurred answers to Williams and then smiled broadly as Lloyd rose to cross-examine.

"You go to a good many public houses in Huddersfield?" was the first defense question.

"Well, when I have plenty of time."

"I don't suppose you remember very well all the public houses you go to?"

"Well, there are so many, aren't there?"

"It is very difficult to pick out a day and say what houses you were in?"

"It depends on who you go with," Robinson smirked.

Mr. Justice Pickford, who was noted as a judge of port, didn't see the joke. "Just give your evidence quietly and properly," he ordered Robinson, who probably couldn't make out where the new voice was coming from.

Lloyd resumed: "You know a good deal about public houses in Huddersfield?"

"Oh, you're right there," Robinson laughingly agreed.

"Did you have a good deal of drink on 1 November?"

"Well, after eight o'clock."

"How many drinks do you normally have during a day?"

"Fifteen or sixteen pints."

This caused some astonishment and amusement in the gallery, and Mr. Justice Pickford said that he would have no laughter in court: "If there is any, the court will be cleared."

Trevor Lloyd: "Don't fifteen or sixteen pints make you muddled?"

"I am just the same next morning as now," Robinson retorted, not realizing that he was, in effect, agreeing with defense counsel. "If I have a pint every half-hour I can last all day."

"Had you a good deal of drink on 2 November?"

"No, my money was running out by then."

"Does an amount of liquor affect your memory?"

"Not at all," Robinson said, at least proving that he remembered what the question was.

No doubt needless to say, the clock-mender was not reexamined. He sauntered lopsidedly out of the court, and perhaps made his uncertain way to the railway station, and the platform saloon, via quite a number of the city's hostelries. Or maybe he waited in the forecourt for his chums, the next three witnesses, to support him.

The three men were John Elliott, a hawker, who testified that he was present when Robinson made the bet on the corn laws; Alfred Holt, an oil merchant—referred to by Robinson as "the doctor"— who said that he had held the stakes in the wager; and Albert Oldham, the landlord of the Dog & Gun, who claimed that he recalled the bet being made and Robinson being in his pub on Monday night.

The Crown case was closed at five minutes before midday.

Trevor Lloyd did not make an opening speech for the defense but at once called the prisoner to give evidence on his own behalf.

Tracked by the warders, Cornelius Howard walked briskly, almost marched, to the witness box. He stood there "with his hands resting on his waist, his shoulders back, and his head thrust forward. In a low but firm voice he answered questions from his counsel."

Lloyd dealt first with Howard's background, concentrating on his service career and stressing that he was in prison,

awaiting trial, from 11 July to 7 October. Then he turned to Howard's arrest in Oldham:

"Do you remember that when the police asked you to account for cuts on your leg, you made a statement about glass falling on you at Joyce's lodging-house?"

"Yes."

"Was that correct or not?"

"I made that statement but it was not correct, for the simple reason that I did not wish it to be known where I got the cut."

"And did you afterwards tell the real circumstances?"

"I did. It was about breaking the window at Tansey & Walker's in Stalybridge. Some glass fell on my legs."

Having obtained an explanation of sorts for the first untrue statement, Lloyd went on to the second, Howard's claim that he was at Joyce's lodginghouse in Huddersfield for the whole of 1 November.

"I really believed at the time that that was true," Howard contended. It was only afterward, he said, that he remembered his visit to the Ring o' Bells. And since making the statement about the domino match with the landlord, he had recalled that he was also in the Prime Hotel, Huddersfield, for half an hour or so from about twenty minutes to eight, and that he had later met William Marmaduke Thompson outside the Conservative committee rooms.

"You had no communication whatever with the landlord of the Ring o' Bells about this matter?"

"None."

Two men who said they were at the Prime Hotel on the night and at the time stated were brought into court, and Howard was asked if he recognized them.

He smiled as he said: "I can't say that I do."

Nearing the end of the examination-in-chief, Lloyd asked: "Is there any truth in saying that you were in Stalybridge or at Gorse Hall on the night of 1 November?"

"None whatever."

"People would be mistaken if they said you were there?"

"Of course."

"Were you in the Ring o' Bells on the *afternoon* of 1 November?"

"Yes. One of the navvies offerred me a handkerchief for

tuppence, but I did not want it, and I bought him a pint of beer."

"Was anything said about voting?"

"I don't remember."

Perhaps thinking that that inconclusive answer indicated Howard's truthfulness, Trevor Lloyd sat down.

Francis Williams was on his feet at once. His first questions dealt with Howard's relationship to, and relations with, George Harry Storrs. As happens in many murder trials, the victim had not been mentioned for a long time, had almost been forgotten.

"The dead man was your cousin?"

"He was."

"Had you seen him after you left the artillery?"

"Yes, on two occasions. I may have seen him more, but I remember two."

"When was the last occasion?"

"I can't give dates—between April and July 1909."

"Where did you see him "

"In Grosvenor Street, Stalybridge."

"Did you speak to him?"

"I did not."

"And he did not recognise you?"

"He did not."

"Why didn't you speak to him?"

"I nodded to him on the first occasion, but he did not seem to notice. I then came to the conclusion that he did not know me."

William's tone did not alter, but he was leading up to a question that he hoped might fox the witness.

"You had been away for years. You knew him. Why didn't you say something to him?"

"We had never had no connections," Howard replied (and one wonders whether tension caused the faulty grammar).

"But you were his first cousin," Williams pointed out. "Why did you not go up to him and say, 'Are you George?' or 'cousin,' or whatever you called him?"

"We were never intimate at all." And Howard's voice was low, little more than a mutter.

Now came the awkward question: "Do you mean that you were not on friendly terms before you went in the army?"

But it misfired. "Oh, friendly, yes," Howard said casually.

"Quite friendly?"

"Not very friendly, but when we saw one another."

"You lived not far from each other?"

"Not very far."

"He used to go to your mother's house?"

"He did not come very often."

"So you spoke to each other very little?"

"We *never* spoke when my mother died. I don't remember ever speaking to him after that date."

"Why not?"

"Well, that seemed to sever the connection between the two families, and I never had anything more to do with them."

"Was there any quarrel?"

"No."

"Then I don't understand, and I should like you to explain why it was that you—you, George Harry Storrs' first cousin—never spoke to him after that."

Howard took his time before replying. The pause lengthened until it seemed that he was not going to answer at all. Then: "I always acknowledged him when I saw him in the street, but he never spoke. That was up to my mother's death and my joining the army."

"Why didn't *you* speak?"

"I don't know. I can't say."

"No reason?"

"No."

"Did you think he had treated you badly in any way?"

"No."

"He was a man well to do?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you speak to him?"

Silence.

"Have you any explanation to give?"

"No."

Sighing ever so slightly, Francis Williams fluttered the

sheets of his brief and then changed the subject to the police "wanted" notice:

"You knew the police sought you in connection with the murder. Why didn't you go to the police? You knew you were wanted in connection with the murder of your cousin, of which you were quite innocent?"

"I was."

"Then why didn't you go to the police and say, 'Notices are issued about the murder of my cousin. Here I am, and I will tell you where I was and that I could not have been there'?"

"I didn't take very much notice of it. To tell the truth, I thought it was a very foolish notion of the police."

Williams looked flabbergasted. Perhaps he actually was. "You didn't take much notice of a charge of murdering your cousin! You were practically charged with being implicated in the murder, and you didn't take much notice of it! Is that what you represent?"

"Yes."

"If it were true that you saw Thompson on 1 November, in Huddersfield, it would be impossible that you could have committed the murder at Gorse Hall. You knew the time the murder was committed, and that if it could be shown satisfactorily that you were with Thompson from half-past eight to nine o'clock, it would clear you?"

"I never thought anything about it."

Mr. Justice Pickford required clarification: "Do you mean that you did not think of being with Thompson, or that you did not think it would be any good for you?"

"I did not consider it at all at the time."

Francis Williams: "Had you not been reflecting as to where you were on that night?"

"No, I had not, Howard said brusquely. "I never thought I should be called on to give an explanation."

"But you have told me, you know," Williams exclaimed, sounding like a man who ardently wished to comprehend the incomprehensible. "There was your description in the papers, and you knew that description was given because you were wanted in connection with your cousin's death?"

"Yes."

"Then what do you mean when you say you didn't think you would be wanted?"

Silence.

Williams waited, but Howard could not think of an answer.

So Williams changed the subject: "You made a statement, which you now say is untrue, with regard to the way in which you wounded your leg. Why did you make that false statement?"

"Because I did not wish it to be known how I had really done it."

"Why not?"

"Because I was breaking into a grocery warehouse."

"You knew at the time you were arrested that it was on the charge of murder?"

"That is not so," Howard protested.

"They were questioning you about the murder?"

"They were."

Making his point crystal-clear, Williams said: "So it comes to this—there is a charge of murder hanging over you, and you give a false statement to escape a shopbreaking charge?"

"I had not been cautioned."

"What has that got to do with it?" the judge queried.

No reply.

Francis Williams: "Don't you tell the truth except when you have been cautioned? You now say the true explanation is that the wound was caused by glass from the window at Tansey & Walker's at Stalybridge?"

"That is so."

"It must have cut through the trousers?"

"Yes."

"Were you wearing the same trousers as when you were arrested?"

"I was."

"You know there was no cut found in the trousers?"

"I heard it said."

"You heard it said . . . ," Williams murmured, his gaze wandering to the curved ceiling as if he hoped to find more help there than he was getting from the witness. He continued:

"When did you first mention the bet with Thompson?"

"To my solicitor—on the 18th or 19th of November, soon after I was charged."

"If the betting incident occurred on 1 November, it would be impossible for you to have been at Stalybridge at the time of the murder?"

"Yes."

End of cross-examination. Not the best question to finish up with, many people felt. It at least needed amplification. As it stood, it sounded like a question for the defense.

Cornelius Howard walked back to the dock, which he had left an hour and fifty minutes before. He sat down and listened attentively to the rest of the defense witnesses.

First, there were the two men who claimed that they had seen him in the Prime Hotel, Huddersfield, at about eight o'clock on the night of 1 November.

Charles Boyle, a laborer, said that he and others were waiting at the hotel for a motorcar to take them to a polling station, but the car never arrived, so they did not vote. Howard was there, he said. A stranger had come in and offered drinks all round, and Howard was one of those who accepted the largesse.

Another laborer, Charles Lee, said that he had noticed Howard particularly.

Why?

"Well, to tell you the truth, we thought he was a detective in disguise. We thought he had come to spy on the landlord."

"What was there to spy?" Francis Williams asked.

"They don't allow games at public houses in Huddersfield."

Alluding to Howard's slight stature, Williams inquired: "Do you judge detectives by their size and weight?"

"Mostly by their appearance."

"Did you speak to Howard at all?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Justice Pickford now called an adjournment.

Many of the spectators left the court to ease their aching rumps, stretch their legs, and have a smoke. As the end of the specified half-hour approached, they tried to obtain readmit-

tance; but the javelin men, perhaps thinking that there had been too much noise from the gallery during the morning, refused to let them in. The judge resumed his seat, but the arguing voices—almost hysterical, some of them—were audible enough to disturb the proceedings. After finding out what the trouble was, the judge told the javelin men to allow some of the people to enter. "Quite a remarkable number of them were old ladies," observed the reporter for the *Chester Chronicle*.

The first of the after-adjournment witnesses was William Marmaduke Thompson. In examination-in-chief, he did not deviate from the account he had given at the Dukinfield police court.

After the committal proceedings, the Director of Public Prosecutions had offered advice to Colonel Hamersley, the chief constable, on points that needed clarification and tasks that the police should carry out. The DPP had stressed the importance of Thompson: "It appears to me that as this alibi, if accepted, would be conclusive in favour of the defense, an attempt to meet it should be made." He had noted, *inter alia*, that "the polling takes place from 8 to 8. It would therefore not seem necessary for Thompson to stay at the Committee Rooms later than 8 p.m. He would probably be busy just before 8 but not after." The police must have made inquiries regarding the time when Thompson finished work at the Conservative headquarters. Perhaps these confirmed his story; but if not, then it is impossible to explain why Francis Williams did not ask Thompson a single question about the apparent overtime.

Crown counsel focused his attention on Thompson's assertion that Howard had said: "I see you're busy, Billy." There was an inconsistency here, it seemed; and Williams asked Thompson to reconcile the "busy" comment with the fact that he was lounging beside the entrance of the committee rooms. All that Thompson could say was: "I suppose I was busy doing nothing."

Referring to Boyle and Lee, Williams suggested: "You have taken a very active part in getting witnesses on behalf of the prisoner?"

"No, not a very active part," Thompson replied easily. He admitted only that he had spoken to the two laborers, who had described Howard's "clothes and everything."

The last defense witness of any importance was Frederick Gibson, the navvy whom Howard had been unable to recognize in court. He said that he went to Huddersfield in October 1909 and found work on the Midland Railway. He finished work on the last Saturday of that month, and though he was given the option of working on Monday, 1 November, he had spent the whole day, from eight in the morning, in the Ring o' Bells. He remembered Howard, or someone very much like him, challenging the landlord to a game of dominoes during the evening.

Asked by Williams if he was drinking all day, he replied: "Yes, off and on. We were drinking fourpenny beer."

Had he gone to the pub on Tuesday? No, Gibson said; he had collected the twelve and a half pence owing to him for his Saturday work from the railway timekeeper, and had then gone to Wakefield with a pal. The pal had wanted to pawn some earrings, but as the shops were closed in Dewsbury, they had gone on to Wakefield. Gibson was not asked to explain why his pal had not wanted to pawn the earrings in Huddersfield.

So the defense evidence ended, and Trevor Lloyd made his closing speech. He spoke for an hour and a half, but it would be superfluous to report much of what he said. At the start, he contended: "This is one of the most extraordinary cases that ever came into a court of justice. You have a most sensational murder, murder of a most foul kind, and there is a mystery around it which I suggest will probably never be cleared up." He stressed the Crown's inability to suggest a motive; criticized the four women from Gorse Hall ("There is such a thing as repeating a statement until one really believes it to be true") and noted dangers of relying on identification evidence; argued that there was a connection between the incidents of 10 September and 1 November, and reminded the jury that Cornelius Howard was in jail on the first date; made much of both the Ring o' Bells evidence and the testimony of William Marmaduke Thompson. At the end of the speech, he

said: "The prisoner has undergone the terrible ordeal of going into the witness box, and despite the able cross-examination of my learned friend, came out seemingly an innocent man."

Whether Francis Williams agreed with this comment is open to doubt. He made no reference to Howard's showing in his closing speech, but concentrated on three aspects of the case. First, he emphasized the value of the eyewitness evidence, and suggested that it was hard to accept the way in which Trevor Lloyd had dealt with the testimony of Mary Evans and Marion Lindley: the cook was criticized for hesitating, the niece for being positive from the very moment she saw Howard at Dukinfield police station. Second, he asserted that the tripartite alibi (Ring o'Bells/Conservative headquarters/Prime Hotel) should be taken with a pinch of salt: "Those who practice in courts know that the simplest way, and the cleverest way, is not to invent false facts, which are apt to fall to pieces in cross-examination, but to take real facts and transpose the day." Third, though agreeing that "to a certain extent" the prosecution had been unable to assign a motive to Howard [which, incidentally, was not required of them], he said that "it is equally true that it has been impossible to discover any motive existing in the mind of any man for committing the murder, although the fact that somebody did it is not a matter for conjecture."

Williams concluded: "It is your duty, gentlemen of the jury—and no doubt one you will gladly discharge—to look the case firmly in the face; and if, in spite of all the evidence adduced, you come to the decision in your own minds that the prisoner is the man who was at Gorse Hall on 1 November, in the discharge of your duty to the public, you will find that he is guilty of the crime."

This short peroration, though marred by qualifications, carries more impact—in print, at any rate—than the dying fall at the close of Trevor Lloyd's speech.

Now it was for Mr. Justice Pickford to sum up. In a speech lasting just under an hour, he told the jury what he understood the term "reasonable doubt" to mean. He synthesized all the evidence, and commented adversely on James Davies,

the landlord, and John Robinson, the clock-mender, saying that "Robinson's facetious manner in the witness box was no doubt due to the fact that before he entered it he had been having some of those half-hourly pints which he spoke of." He said that it was in Howard's favor that, as far as was known, he had made the statement about the Ring o' Bells to the police without having spoken to Davies. He ended up distinctly unhelpfully by telling the jury that if they were satisfied with the evidence of identification at Gorse Hall, then they should consider "the testimony on the one side and on the other as to the movements of Howard on the night of the murder."

The summing-up was concluded at eight minutes past six, and the jury retired at once.

Cornelius Howard remained in the dock—but he did not have to wait long. Just twenty minutes. Then, after the ushers' cry of "jury," the judge returned to the bench.

The members of the jury filed back. Their faces were scanned, not only by Howard but by everyone in the crowded court. According to a reporter: "All the twelve looked anxious and oppressed by the weight of their duty; but nothing was to be gleaned from their expressions."

There were a few whispers of impatience as the clerk of arraigns read out the names of the jurymen.

Then the clerk recited:

"Gentlemen, are you agreed on your verdict? Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

Howard got up and stepped to the front of the dock.

The foreman of the jury also rose. His voice was faltering, but there was no doubt about the two words he spoke:

"Not guilty."

For a second or so there was silence. Then Howard, with the two warders holding his elbows, stepped back and collapsed into his chair.

Cheering broke out in the gallery; there was clapping and stamping; hats, sticks, and handkerchiefs were waved. "A scene unparalleled in the history of the ancient castle," proclaimed one reporter; "an outburst of cheering unprecedented in a court of justice," hazarded another.

The judge, looking pained, waited for the noise to subside.

"Now you've stopped that indecent exhibition," he said, "I can order the prisoner to be discharged. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for not knowing how to behave in court." Turning to the dock, he said: "Howard, you will be discharged."

Despite Mr. Justice Pickford's rebuke, the cheering started all over again; some hats were not just waved but thrown in the air. As soon as the judge had gone, the dock was fringed with outstretched hands. Looking dazed, Howard shook a few of them. Ignoring the rest, he bent over the front of the dock to shake hands with his solicitor, Ralph Watts. Leaning heavily on the warders, he went down the steps.

In the forecourt of the castle, a great crowd waited for him. But he left by a side door and, without being seen, walked to the railway station. On the platform, waiting for a train to Manchester, some people recognized him, and there were more cheers, shouts of, "Good luck, Corny."

Some days later—no one seems to know quite when—he traveled to Blackpool, the town where he had received his second prison sentence, and got a job as a clerk. For the time being, Cornelius Howard, now using an alias for an uncriminal purpose, was just a man in the street.

The papers had their say.

According to the editorial writer of the *Stalybridge Reporter*, "The verdict was the only just one. . . . The murder at Gorse Hall was a most atrocious crime, and it would have afforded much satisfaction to the public mind if the man who actually committed it had been brought to justice. Is the murder to remain a mystery, like so many other murders which have taken place of late years? The police, it is hoped, will not relax their efforts."

The *Daily News*: "The verdict of not guilty in the Gorse Hall murder trial adds one more to the ever-growing list of unravelled mysteries in the region of crime. The conflict of testimony was extraordinary. . . . The story on the whole possesses more of the features that are reckoned proper to the detective story than any other in the recent annals of the English courts."

The Liberal/liberal *Manchester Guardian* considered that

Howard "was simply a disreputable young relative of the murdered man, and that fact alone doubtless led the police to arrest and examine him."

The *Manchester Evening News* went farther out on a limb than any of the other papers, saying that "the murder of Mr. Storrs is as mysterious a tragedy today as it was when the horrible story was first told. There is next to nothing in the facts for the police to work upon, and they have to admit themselves baffled."

That last comment seemed reasonable. There was, after all, not much that the police could do. Some officers went further than this, remarking that there was *nothing* they could do: Cornelius Howard had been charged, Howard was guilty, but the rule of *autrefois acquit* forbidding double jeopardy meant that, even if clinching evidence against him turned up, he could not be tried again. The Gorse Hall file would be left open, of course—but it would gather nothing but dust.

However, just over three months after Cornelius Howard's trial, something happened in Stalybridge, no distance at all from Gorse Hall, that appeared to shed a quite different light on things. The police—and one detective in particular—started putting two and two together.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONVICT IN KNUTSFORD GAOL

MAGGIE STORRS HAD STAYED ON AT GORSE HALL FOR only a few weeks after the murder; then, accompanied by Marion Lindley, the cook, and the housemaid, she had traveled over the Pennines to the sedate spa town of Harrogate, where a furnished house called Fairhaven had been leased on her behalf by Robert Innes.

But in the spring of 1910, she bought a house in the village of Kents Bank, just across Morecambe Bay from Silverdale, her birthplace. The house, to which she gave the same name as the one in Harrogate, was almost a caricature of Gorse Hall: built of blocks of gray stone, and with a conservatory running along the front for protected viewing of the sands and the sea, it stood on a ledge in a steep hill and was reached by a curving drive from the coastal road.

The furniture and many of the effects at Gorse Hall were removed to Fairhaven, and when everything was in apple-pie order, Maggie and her niece set up residence, with Mary Evans and Eliza Cooper serving their indoor needs and two local men acting as coachman and gardener respectively. Maggie commissioned an artist to paint a full-length, actual-size portrait of George Harry, based on photographs, and the finished work, framed in gilt, was hung over the mantel in the drawing room.

The people of Stalybridge were invited to take anything that was left at Gorse Hall, and in the space of a day the house was ransacked; even the brass knob on the front door was removed.

In the summer, Gorse Hall was demolished.

Some of the townspeople believed that this was Mrs.

Storrs's way of ensuring that there was no "memorial to the murder." But James Storrs gave a mundane explanation: it was most unlikely, he said, that the house could have been let: "The Hall was too large altogether; not only that, but it was situated in a part of the district in which the atmospheric conditions were far from the best owing to the greatly increased number of factory chimneys erected during the past few years, which spoiled the vegetation round and about the Hall."

Sarah Worrall was allowed to remain in the apartment over the stables.

Gorse Hall was not a complete write-off. The stone, timber, and lead were carted down the drive and along the road to the yard of the Aqueduct Mill, and eventually reused. One is intrigued to know what happened to the bell, but there seems to be no record or recollection of whether it was melted down or taken away to toll a message different from that which George Harry Storrs had bought it for.

Monday, 10 June 1910

There was a full moon that night, but the moonlight was occasionally diluted by scudding clouds.

James Bolton, a young cotton worker who lived in the village of Droylesden, known to some as the "western fag-end of Ashton-under-Lyne," walked to Stalybridge to see his girl friend, Gertrude Booth, who worked at the Grosvenor Mill and, her parents being dead, lived with a widowed aunt in one of the diminutive houses built by "Ready-Money Jack" Leech on the land adjoining the mill.

James and Gertrude, who had been courting for nearly five years and had saved enough money to be thinking of "naming the day," decided to take a stroll up Hough Hill. Leaving the house at twenty minutes past eight, they walked arm in arm along Early Bank Road (or "upt' wood," as the road was called by the locals), then rested beside a disused quarry a hundred yards or so from the back of the Gorse Hall estate.

Exactly two hours after leaving home, Gertrude looked at her fob-watch and announced that her aunt would be won-

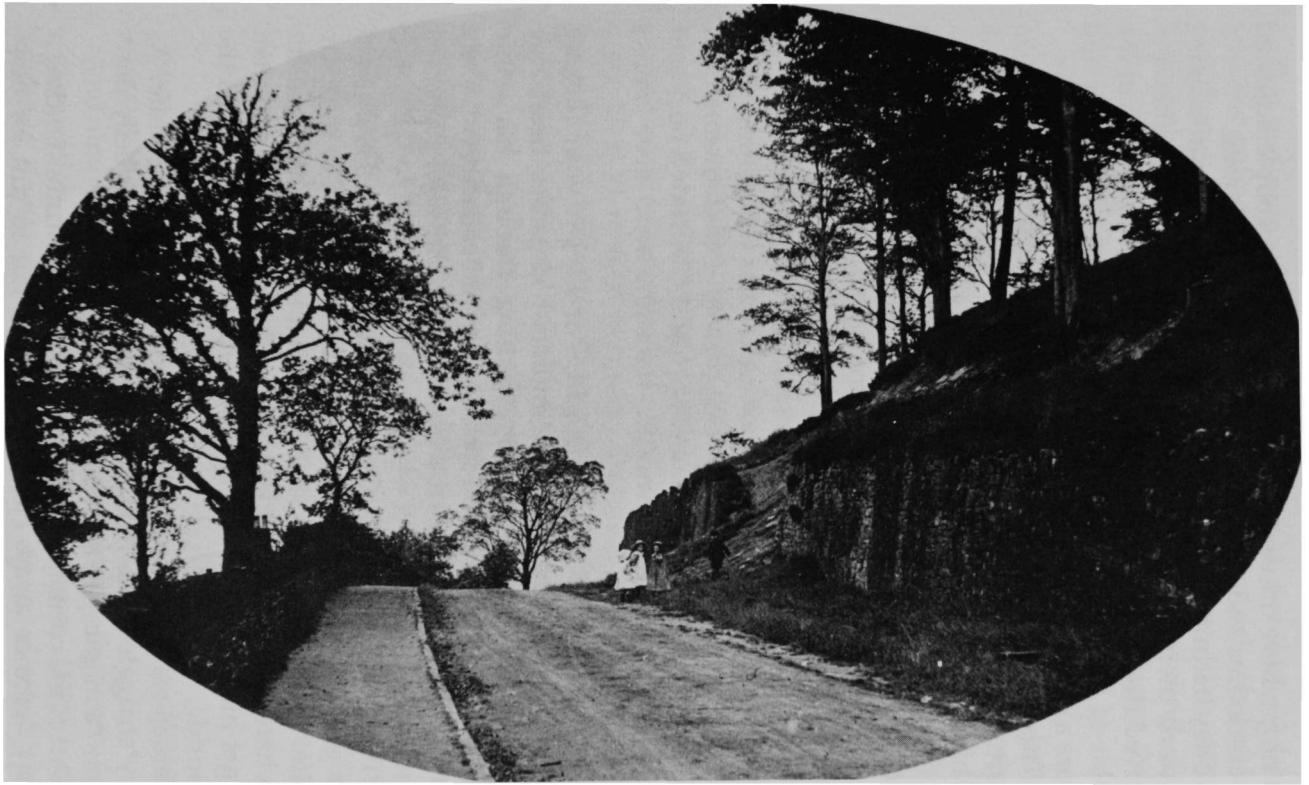


Fig. 15. Early Bank Road. Courtesy of Tameside Libraries and Arts Collections.

dering where on earth she had got to. The couple adjusted their clothes and set off back the way they had come.

They hadn't gone far when they saw a young man walking toward them along the dirt road; as he got closer, they observed that he was very light-complexioned and had hair the color of fledgling corn. He was dressed in a dark suit and wore a cap and a black muffler.

There was something about him which aroused in Gertrude a feeling of "much suspicion." "I don't like the look of him," she whispered to James.

The man passed them; but even so, the couple quickened their pace.

Gertrude looked back.

She cried out to James, but it was too late.

The man had turned in his tracks and run after them.

Before the couple quite knew what was happening, there was a cry of "I'll cut your fucking throats"—then the man was upon them, his left arm curving round Gertrude's neck and his hand covering her mouth, his right hand over James's shoulder.

"Do as I want," the man said, "or I'll cut your fucking throat." Almost at the same moment as James heard the command, he felt something cutting through his white muffler and entering the flesh below his collar-bone. Only then did he realize that the man was holding a long pointed knife.

"For God's sake, run, Gertie," James shouted. He pushed the girl away and turned on his attacker—tried to grab the knife. The man stabbed at him, and James felt the blade cut his hand. But he managed to grasp the man's wrist and then to get his other arm round the man's waist. They fell to the ground.

James was uppermost, but the man still had the knife. As they struggled, the man screamed: "I'll cut your belly out." Then: "I'm going to cut your bloody head off."

Out of the corner of his eye, James saw Gertrude standing a short distance away. He called out to her to run for help. Sobbing hysterically, the girl ran towards Stalybridge—but her foot caught a stone, and she fell headlong.

The two men struggled to an upright position, and the attacker pulled away. Then he came rushing back. He tried to kick James, but James jumped out of the way, then closed with him again. And again they were on the ground. This time, though, James was able to prize the man's fingers away from the knife.

The man cried out: "Come on, Jack, we've got him!"

Fooled into thinking that there was a confederate, James jumped to his feet and rushed over to Gertrude, who had got up. She was weeping and screaming. The couple ran away.

When they got back to the house, Gertrude's aunt at once saw that something was terribly wrong. She tried to comfort her niece, but when she saw the blood oozing through James's muffler, she fainted. Leaving the knife on the kitchen table, James went looking for a policeman and eventually found PC Charles Hulme, who was patrolling Grosvenor Street. The constable went back with him to the house. While Hulme listened to James's story (Gertrude had her work cut out trying to restore her aunt, and said very little), he removed the muffler from James's neck, unbuttoned the shirt, and cleaned the wound with Lysol soap and water. It was not a deep cut, and the constable reckoned that the muffler had taken most of the force of the blow. Leaving the two women to comfort each other, James led Hulme up Early Bank Road and showed him the spot where the attack had taken place; there were plenty of signs of the struggle in the dirt.

Hulme reported the incident to the night inspector at Stalybridge police station; but, as in the Gorse Hall case, the scene of the crime was just across the boundary in Dukinfield.

Superintendent Croghan deputed Inspector William Brewster to take charge of the investigation.

And almost at once Brewster wondered whether there was a connection between the attack on James Bolton and Gertrude Booth and the murder of George Harry Storrs. Three things made him wonder: the proximity of the attack to Gorse Hall; the use of a knife; the way the courting couple's

description of the attacker tallied with the four women's description of the murderer:

> The attacker was aged from twenty-five to thirty, height 5 ft. 8 in. about, medium build, light complexion with very light hair, shabbily dressed in dark clothes, wore a muffler round his neck and wore boots or shoes badly down at the back.

On Tuesday morning, Brewster took a few minutes off to telephone Detective Inspector William Thomas Pierce at constabulary headquarters in Chester.

Pierce has been mentioned before but only very briefly: at the trial of Cornelius Howard, after a mix-up with a reporter, he was identified by James Davies as the officer who had interviewed him.

He was a dapper man in his mid-thirties who had been a policeman for some fifteen years. The boyishness of his features was only partly amended by a triangular mustache. His dark hair was quiffed. He was always immaculately dressed, and in 1910 he was abreast of fashion with a pointed collar and a small bow tie. He had the reputation of being a "leech" of a detective, which is another way of saying that he was obsessional. Since the Howard trial, he and Brewster had met on several occasions, and always the conversation had come round to the murder of George Harry Storrs.

After listening to Brewster's account of what had happened in Early Bank Road the night before, he thought for a while, then, his mind made up, walked down the corridor to William Leah's office. He told the deputy chief constable that "something was up" at Dukinfield that might, just might, have a bearing on the Gorse Hall case, and he requested permission to look into things. Without hesitation, Leah signed a chit of approval. Pierce tidied up his desk (which didn't really need tidying), briefed a detective sergeant on his outstanding work, and packed a bag and set off for Dukinfield.

By the time he got to the police station, Brewster had traced a witness to the fact that a young man, behaving rather oddly, was in Early Bank Road soon after ten o'clock on Monday night. Harry Mills, a fitter who lived in Leech Street, which

ran at right angles to the street in which Gertrude Booth's aunt rented a house, said that he and his wife were coming back from the Rising Moon Inn, toward Hyde, when they saw a man staring at them from behind some railings in Early Bank Road. They were about ten yards away from him when he came onto the road and walked slowly toward them; they thought he was going to speak but he walked straight past. As he went by, Mills noticed that "he had something bright, like steel, up his sleeve." Wanting to seem friendly, Mills said good-night, and the greeting was returned.

On Wednesday, 22 June, the police found a more important witness. This was George Hayes, a young employee at the Grosvenor Mill, who lived with his parents in another of the streets on "Ready-Money Jack" Leech's housing estate. He was in Early Bank Road on Monday night; at about twenty minutes to eleven, he reckoned, he happened upon an old friend, a native of Stalybridge called Mark Wilde. "Is that thee, Mark?" he called out. "Aye," was the reply, "Is that thee, Jud?" George—or Jud—Hayes asked for a light, and as the match flared he saw that his friend looked the worse for wear: he had a mark on the side of his nose and his clothes were smeared with dirt. "Have you been in a scrap?" Hayes asked. Wilde shook his head. He said that he was just out for a stroll. Hayes pointed out that it was rather late to be walking away from home, but Wilde said that it was a nice night and added that if he felt tired when he got near Hyde, he could catch a tram back to Stalybridge.

Pierce and Brewster made inquiries about Mark Wilde. Among the first things they heard, which must have somewhat encouraged them, was that he was fair-haired, light-complexioned, and briefly mustached.

They learned that he had been born in Stalybridge twenty-eight years before, and now lived with his parents, John and Emma Wilde, at 48 Robinson Street, a small red-brick house almost in the shadow of the Aqueduct Mill. He was the only son among the Wildes' seven offspring. John Wilde, an illiterate former soldier who worked at the Stalybridge "joint" railway station, was a teetotaller and a nonsmoker.

When he left school, Mark Wilde had several jobs, none of

which lasted long, and on 7 January 1901 he enlisted in the Worcestershire Regiment. Most of his time in the army was spent overseas: three years in Bermuda were followed by two in Jamaica, then two in Malta, whence he returned to England, arriving at Dover, where the Worcesters had a barracks, on 10 October 1908. On 6 January 1909, he left the army and joined the reserve, taking with him a discharge paper which stated that he had "an exemplary character, with no offence; sober and reliable"; his description on the paper included the detail that he was "5 ft. 5¼ in. in stockinged feet." He traveled home to Stalybridge. His father had arranged for him to become a shunter's assistant at the railway station, and he remained in this job until the morning (he was on the night shift) of Friday, 10 September 1909.

No doubt that last date cause both Pierce and Brewster to prick up their ears: it was the day of the window-breaking incident at Gorse Hall.

At midday on Thursday, 23 June, the two detectives

Fig. 16. Robinson Street. Recent photograph taken by the author.

knocked at the door of 48 Robinson Street and were admitted by Emma Wilde, a lackluster woman who wore gold-rimmed spectacles that looked as appropriate as a nosegay on a coffin. Her son was having his "dinner," and, apparently unperturbed, finished the meal while he answered the first of the detectives' questions. When he pushed his plate aside, he was asked if he was wearing the same clothes that he had worn on the Monday night. He said that he was. Pierce got him to take off his navy-blue serge jacket and waistcoat, and after examining them asked Wilde how he accounted for what appeared to be bloodstains inside the right sleeve of the jacket and on the lining of the waistcoat. Wilde said that he had been in a fight in Ashton-under-Lyne.

He was taken to Dukinfield police station, and that evening, between six o'clock and half-past seven, was put on an identification parade with nine men of similar height, age, and coloring. James Bolton picked him out at once. And though Gertrude Booth was close to fainting, she did, too. Harry Mills went along the line twice before touching Wilde on the shoulder: all he would say was that Wilde was the "most likely man."

So, adding the evidence of George Hayes, the police appeared to have an unassailable case. At half-past eight, William Brewster charged Wilde with "intent to maim" and he was put in a cell; the next morning, the police had second thoughts about the nature of the crime, and the charge was altered to one of attempted murder. Wilde answered, "I have nothing to say," to the original charge and remained silent after the second.

But that does not mean that he was altogether reticent. William Pierce, no longer particularly interested in the attack on the courting couple, asked him a number of questions relating to the murder at Gorse Hall. Wilde's answers were strung together into a statement, which he signed:

> I remember 10 September last. Shortly before six o'clock in the evening, when my sister came home from work, I went to the Astley Arms [a pub a few yards from 48 Robinson Street]. I returned home shortly after eight o'clock to get my supper prior to going to work, as I was due at the joint station at nine o'clock. My

father and I had a few words, and I told my mother I would not go to work. I left the house and went back to the Astley Arms and stopped there until closing time, and about 11.30 I went to Mrs. Mason's off Potter's Stage and remained there until the following morning, when I left at about ten o'clock.[1] I fix the date because I got shelved for not going to work, and the following night I heard of the occurrence at Gorse Hall.

I also remember the night of 1 November because that night I left home to go to the second house at the Hipp in Ashton [the Hippodrome, at which the second performance of the music-hall bill started at nine o'clock], and on arrival at Ashton I went down Old Street and had a drink at the Commercial. I went from there to the Robin Hood and had another glass of beer there. From there I went to the Wine Bar in Old Street and had two or three glasses of beer, and then I started for home.

When I got to Scotland Brow, opposite the labour exchange that is now, a fellow was just coming out of the public house there as I was going in. He gave me a shove and knocked my hat off, and told me to get out of the road, so I struck him. He ran down the street by the Bluebell public house, and I followed and caught him just round the corner, and we had a fight.

After we finished, I went home by way of Tame Valley and the generating station. I turned off there to go home, but I thought I would have a drink at the Victoria Hotel, but stood at the corner of High Street amd Binns Street, and there saw my cousin Thomas Lockwood. He told me about the affair at Gorse Hall. We parted, and I went home.

On getting into the house, my mother remarked about my having been fighting. She said: "Where hast thou been, Mark, to get like that? Thy face is bleeding, and thou hast got blood on thy muffler." I told her that I had been having a fight at a beer house in Ashton. I told her I had got blood on my shirt-sleeves with having my coat off to fight. I cannot fix the time, but just then someone came in and said Storrs had been murdered. Then I mentioned about Tom Lockwood having told me. I then went to bed.

I had two revolvers, but I took them to pieces and threw them away, because I thought if anyone saw them, they might think I had something to do with the murder.

My mother washed the blood off my muffler and shirt. I will show the police where the parts of my revolvers are which I threw away. I bought one of the revolvers when I was abroad and the other in Dover, England, in the barracks, from a soldier. I don't know his name; he was one of the Worcesters, but I don't know

1. Ann Mason, a widow, lived at 2 Potter's Stage, a flagged courtyard in "Ready-Money Jack's" housing estate. Interviewed by the police, she said that Wilde "stayed on the sofa one night in September, the exact date I am unable to recall."

which company. It was in November or December 1908. I only gave the soldier a few drinks for the revolver because it was out of order.

Of the clothes I was wearing when arrested, the coat and vest are those I was wearing on 1 November last, 1909. The trousers are at home. The inside lining of the right sleeve of the coat I was then wearing has on blood from the man I was fighting when in Ashton on 1 November last. I cannot give the name of the man I was fighting with, or of any person who saw us.

William Pierce was by now pretty well convinced that Mark Wilde was the murderer of George Harry Storrs. In addition to the points that had struck Inspector Brewster, there was the fact that Wilde had not gone to work on the night of the window-breaking incident, there was the seemingly too convenient and too well remembered account of where he was at the time of the murder and of how the blood got on his clothes, and there was his dual admission that he had owned two revolvers—one out of order, as the American Bullock was—and had thrown them away after hearing about the crime at Gorse Hall.

There was a lot of investigating to be done, but Pierce was willing—no, eager—to work day and night to construct a case.

Wilde was insisting that, though he was in Early Bank Road between ten and eleven o'clock on the night of 20 June, he did not attack James Bolton and Gertrude Booth, and that the knife—which had been shown to him—was not his. So Pierce, thinking far more of the Gorse Hall case than of the Early Bank Road one, sought to establish Wilde's ownership of the knife (the blade of which had been measured and found to be eight inches long and just over an inch in width where it met the handle). Engraved on the razor-sharp blade were the words "KEYTE Manchester." Pierce located the firm in Deansgate, and the cutler turned up his records, which showed that only three of the knives had been sold since 1907; disappointingly for the inspector, neither the dates of the sales nor the names of the buyers had been recorded, and the cutler had no recollection of any of the transactions.

While Pierce was in Manchester, Brewster did some night-work. Just before midnight, he ordered a cab. Constable

Albert Edmunds brought Mark Wilde up from his cell, and the three men set off on a tour of Stalybridge, with Wilde giving directions as to where he had disposed of the parts of his two revolvers. The first stop was northwest of the town, near the Ladysmith army barracks in Mossley Road, about a mile and a half from Robinson Street: Wilde pointed indiscriminately at two fields and said, "I threw the sides of a handle and a spring over there." They drove into the center of Stalybridge, and Wilde told the driver to stop by the Clarence Mill; pointing to the bridge over the Peak Forest Canal, he said that he had thrown "a butt and barrel in one piece and some of an inside" in the water. The next stop was in Caroline Street, one of the spokes that connected with the hub of Albert Square; indicating the canal that passed beneath the street within a dozen yards of the Oddfellows Hall, Wilde said that that was where he had thrown a cylinder. The last stop was near the town hall, where Wilde pointed to a lock on the Manchester & Huddersfield Canal: "I threw the body of a revolver in there," he said.

During the drive from one alleged dropping-off place to another, Wilde mentioned that he had thrown away the last piece "some time in February." Considering his apparently phenomenal memory for dates, the minutiae of incidents, and the names of pubs, the two policement were probably surprised by his inability to remember the exact day of the month.

"Why did you do it?" Constable Edmunds asked, and Wilde replied: "I thought some of you chaps would come searching around for the Gorse Hall job, and if you found the revolvers you might think I had something to do with it."[2]

During the next few days, Edmunds searched the fields near the army barracks, and perhaps also the canals, but he did not come across any part of a gun.

Either during the midnight drive or when Wilde was se-

2. Mark Wilde seems to have had a repertoire of speech patterns: sometimes he spoke in the local dialect, peppering his comments with "thees" and "thys"; at other times he spoke in fairly standard English; and occasionally he came periously close to speaking "fraffly" (in which "frightfully kind of you" is distorted into "fraffly cane a few").

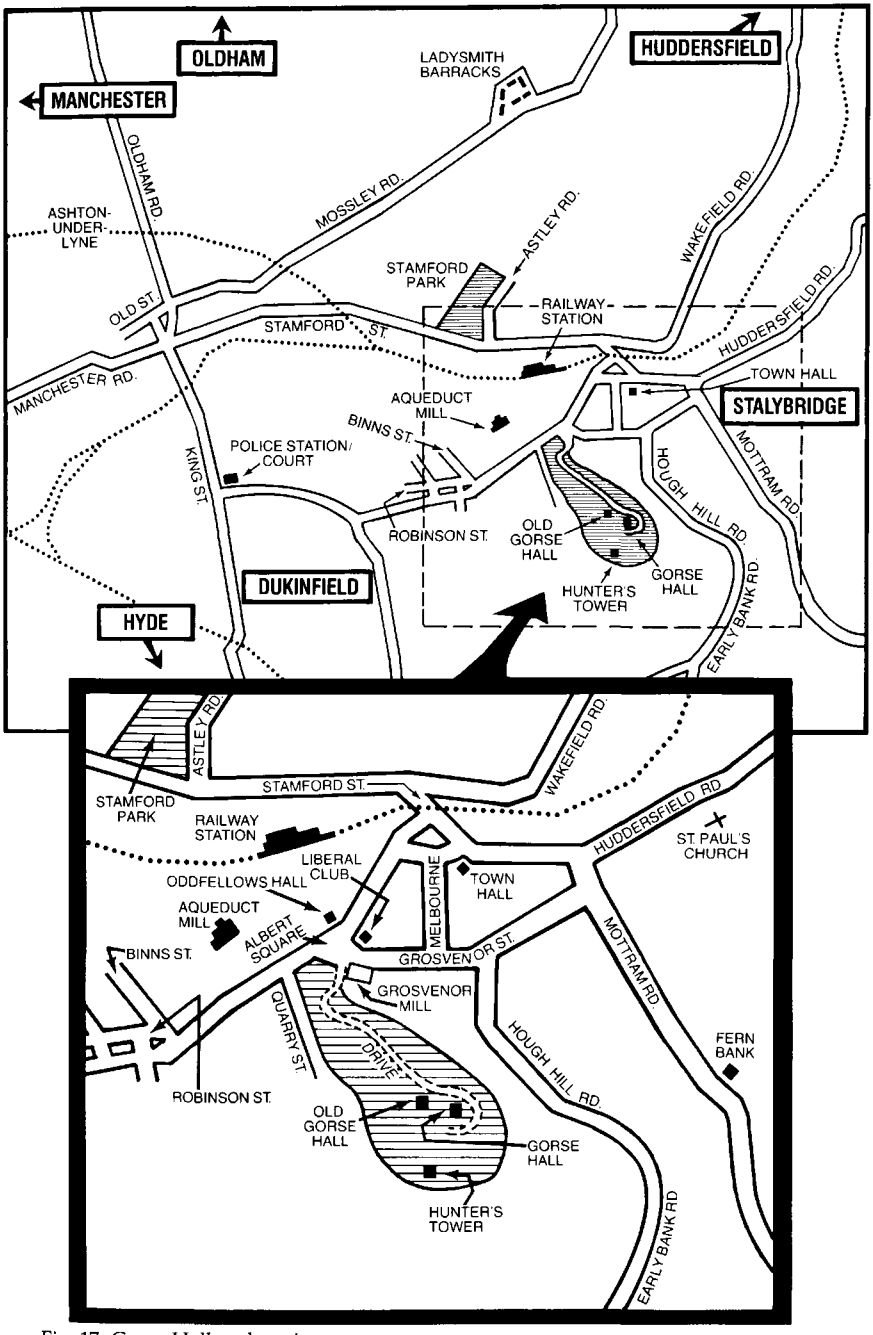


Fig. 17. Gorse Hall and environs.

curely stationary at the station, he mentioned that there was some ammunition at his home. This may indicate honesty; on the other hand, perhaps Wilde, foreseeing that the police would search the house in Robinson Street, decided that it made best sense to tell them about the ammunition, thus frustrating their chance of making forensic capital out of the discovery.

On the morning of Saturday, 25 June, William Pierce went to the house and foraged around the rooms, with Emma Wilde following and putting things back in place. He found the pair of trousers that Wilde claimed he was wearing on the night of the murder. And, without having to look very hard, he found the ammunition: there was a clip of five rifle bullets, of the type used by the army, on the mantelpiece in the kitchen; and in an old box in the same room was the nose-end of a service-type bullet (which must have made the inspector think about the decapitated cartridge wedged into a chamber of the American Bullock).

On that same day, or perhaps the following one, William Brewster went to the police station in Ashton-under-Lyne to meet the two constables who were on beat-duty in the area of the Bluebell Inn on the night of 1 November. It is not known whether they produced their notebooks or relied on their memories, but both were sure that they had not been called to deal with a street brawl nor been informed of one after the event; so Wilde's account of where he was at the time of the murder and of how he got the bloodstains on his clothes remained unsubstantiated. One of the policemen, Constable James Malone, was excessively Irish. He pointed out: "Well, sor, many's the time people come to you and say, 'Officer, you should have been here twenty minutes ago.'"

As was so with Cornelius Howard, Mark Wilde spent only a few days at Dukinfield police station and was then sent to Strangeways. He was brought back to Dukinfield for the committal proceedings in the Early Bank Road case, which began in the late morning of Friday, 1 July, and were completed the next morning, when he was committed for trial at the forthcoming Chester assizes. After the committal, he was imprisoned in Cheshire's own jail on the edge of the small

market town of Knutsford—which, being only ten miles southwest of Manchester, was fast becoming more important as a commuting base than as a center of the leather and worsted trades.

Knutsford Gaol, or House of Correction, dated from 1817, when it was built as a county jail additional to the one at Chester, which had become overcrowded as a result of the increase in petty crime after the Napoleonic wars. Four-fifths of the site was for male prisoners; the remaining parallelogram at the rear was for women. When transportation to Australia ceased in the 1850s, the jail in Chester was closed and the one at Knutsford enlarged to cope with prisoners from the whole county: a K-shaped building of three stories, capable of holding 700 inmates, was erected. The cells, which had small, arched (and, of course, barred) windows, measured thirteen feet by seven, and the rows of cells were separated, but only just, by corridors fourteen inches wide—which meant that on still days the aroma was pretty rich. The least-used structure in the grounds was the execution shed, in which the gallows had suspended human ballast only four times since 1887.

The trial of Mark Wilde for attempted murder was held in the afternoon of Tuesday, 12 July.

The judge was Mr. Justice Channell, himself the son of a judge—indeed, a baron of the exchequer. Before being raised to the bench, he had specialized in non-jury cases, chiefly to do with local govenment, and was reckoned an authority on the rather esoteric subject of sewers. His appearance of aestheticism, aided by the monocle jammed in his weak left eye, belied the fact that his interests were aquatic: in his youth, he had rowed in the First Trinity Crew, which won the Grand Challenge and the Ladies' Plate at the Henley Regatta of 1861, and he was now a keen yachtsman.

The prosecution case was considered so strong that an economy was made by instructing a pair of legal nonentities to present it. But still, at the start of the trial, the Crown was better served than was Wilde, who had no counsel at all. After the charge had been read, Wilde said, "Not guilty, sir,"

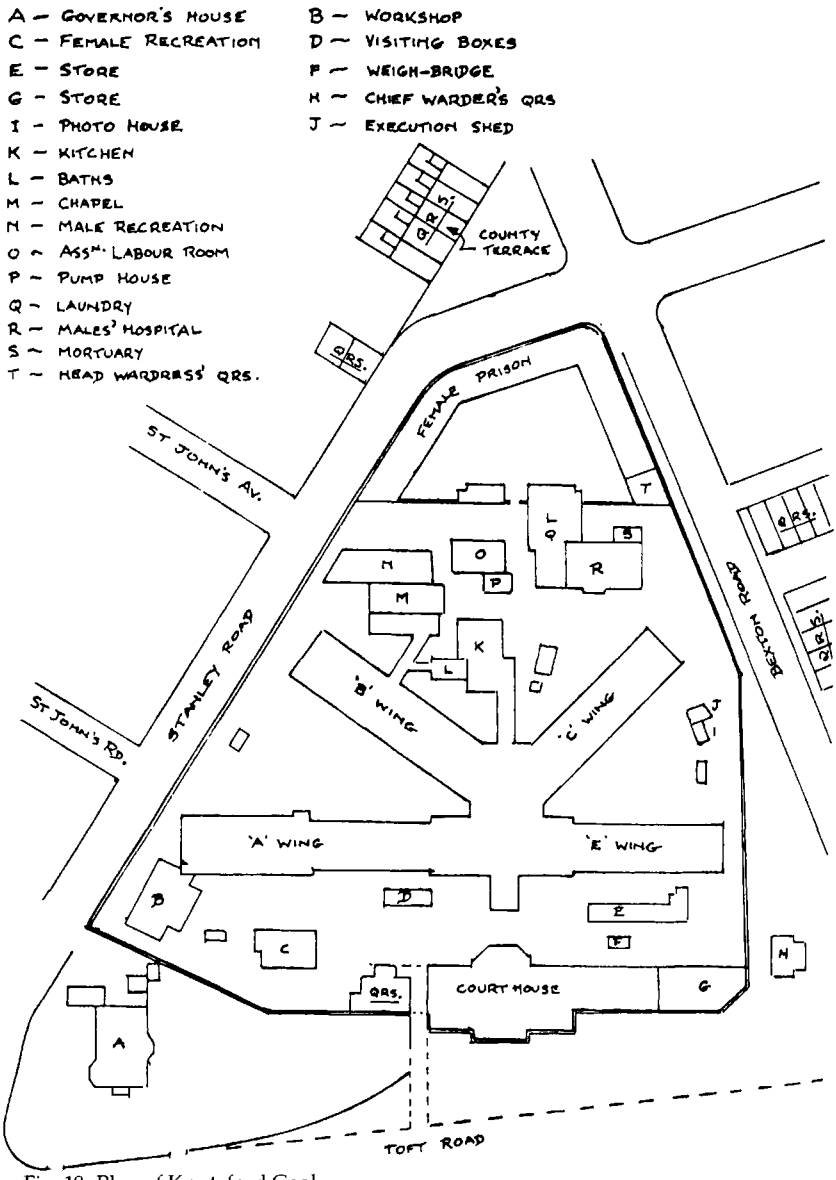


Fig. 18. Plan of Knutsford Gaol.

then turned to Mr. Justice Channell and plaintively inquired: "My Lord, I beg your pardon but can I have someone to defend me?"

"You are rather late in asking," the judge snapped.

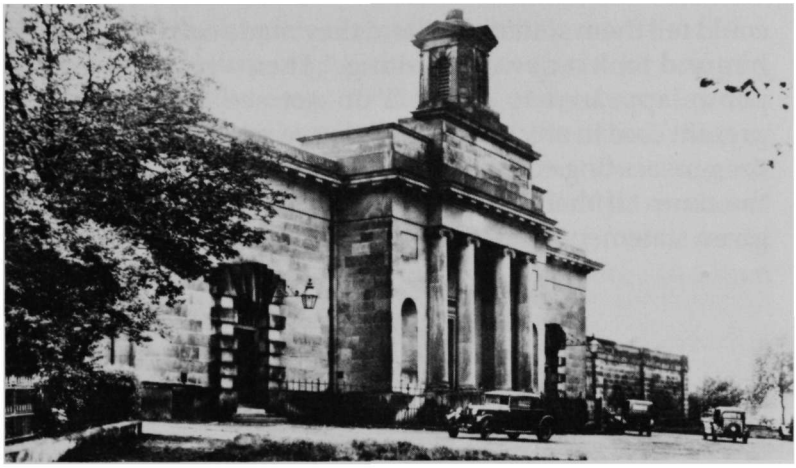


Fig. 19. Knutsford Gaol.

"I did not know until Saturday, your Lordship, that I was not going to have counsel. I was to have had it, but they could not get the money."

"You mean, your friends were trying to get it for you?"

Wilde said that was so.

Mr. Justice Channell thought aloud: "I do not know that you are entitled to it strictly, for I do not recollect that you said anything before the magistrates. Prisoners are only entitled to be defended if they make a defence at that stage." But after further musing, the judge agreed to assign counsel, and a barrister called Parry—who was presumably either waiting around in the castle at the end of the case in which he had appeared or had arrived in the precincts a day early—was given the thankless task of putting up a defense on Wilde's behalf.

The judge did not help at all. He insisted on seeing all statements made by Wilde, and then, again seemingly talking to himself, prejudiced the prisoner by saying: "Oh, I see—they suspected him of something else. A case well known. Yes, let me see, it occurred in this part of the country."

While Parry and Wilde became ever more downcast, he burbled on: "The statement seems to show that the police thought this young man could give some information about the Gorse Hall murder. The police seem to have believed he

could tell them something, and they made certain inquiries of him and took it down in writing." Then—at last, at last—the penny appeared to drop: "I do not see that it affects the present case in any way." His one-eye-assisted gaze fell upon the prosecuting counsel, who happened to be standing up at the time. "If that is all," he said, "then the prisoner did not give a statement as to his movements on the night of 20 June."

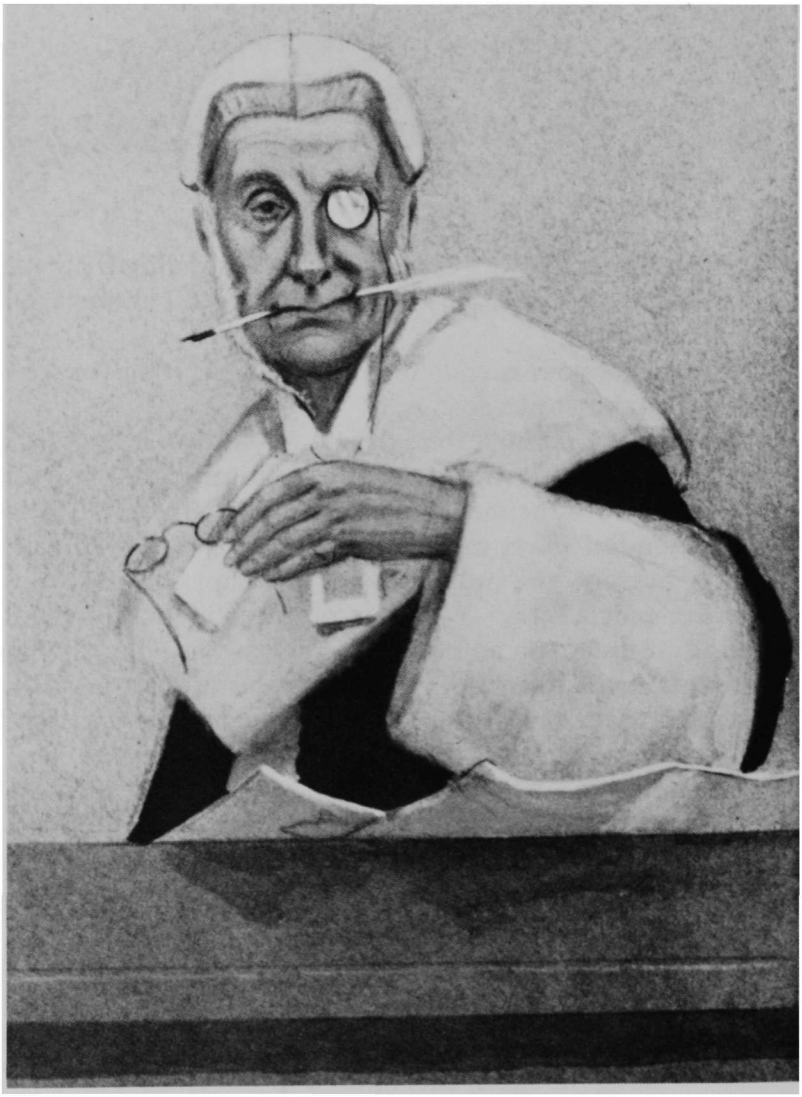


Fig. 20. Mr. Justice Channell. A "Spy" cartoon from *Vanity Fair*.

"Precisely," the barrister remarked politely.

After that, the jury might have been forgiven for bringing in a verdict of guilty even if Wilde had proved conclusively that he was in Timbuktu at the time of the attack. But, of course, he had no vestige of an alibi, and the evidence against him was overwhelming. The jury stayed out only a quarter of an hour—time enough for a smoke, perhaps, or a casual conversation about the current political situation—and then found against the accused.

Now Mr. Justice Channell sought to give the impression that he was considering the sentence.

He asked Wilde if he had anything to say, and was told: "I did not do it, sir."

Ignoring this, the judge pointed out: "The puzzle to myself—and the jury, no doubt—is, what *made* you do it? I should like you to satisfy me on that point because it will make a difference to the sentence I am going to pass. Did you carry the knife about for the purpose of perpetrating a practical joke or what?"

"I never owned the weapon," Wilde insisted.

The judge now made a comment which suggests that he was just not listening: "I cannot help it," he murmured. After once more wishing that Wilde would give an explanation for his crime—"for it would help me in the punishment I am going to mete out"—he surprised practically everyone in court, particularly Mark Wilde, by passing the meager sentence of two months with hard labor.

The only reporter present[3] noted: "The prisoner appeared pleased with the leniency of the term imposed, and quickly darted to the cells below."

In fact, he had nothing to feel happy about, for the sentence was an "arranged" one.[4] The term of two months, as well as giving ample time to Inspector Pierce and his helpers to prepare a case against Wilde for the murder of George Harry Storrs, ensured that he would not be transferred from Knuts-

3. The belief of the police that Wilde had committed the murder at Gorse Hall was a well-kept secret until Mr. Justice Channell let the cat out of the bag; even after this, most newspapers were unaware of the inquiries for another five weeks.

4. This revelation is made in the official history of the Cheshire Constabulary (see bibliography).

ford to some perhaps distant prison for long-term convicts. Mr. Justice Channell must have made the remarks about the Gorse Hall case either to safeguard himself against a rebuke from on high for imposing a penalty that was inappropriate to the crime or as a veiled thrust at the police for interfering with his right to decide the sentence.

Pierce did not give evidence at or attend the trial. He was far too busy. Among the several small jobs that he was doing himself or delegating to others were the following:

Item. Measuring distances. A pedometer gave these readings, *inter alia*, from 48 Robinson Street: to the Bluebell Inn, Ashton (where, according to Wilde, he had had the fight on 1 November), 2,290 yards; to the Ashton Hippodrome (Wilde's destination, so he said—to catch the second performance, starting at nine o'clock—before he had got sidetracked by the pubs) 3,063 yards; to the Robin Hood, only a few doors from the Hippodrome (if Wilde was to be believed, the farthest pub that he had visited that night), 3,090 yards. These distances, Pierce concluded, ruled out the notion that Wilde could have done all the things he said he had done and still have got to Gorse Hall in time to commit the murder. Even so, Pierce had another distance measured: the shortest route from Gorse Hall to 48 Robinson Street—over fields and through some allotments—was 1,150 yards.

Item. Tracing Wilde's friends and acquaintances—to establish whether, apart from the fight by the Bluebell, he had been involved in street brawls, and whether his personality, behavior, or conversations suggested an explanation as to why he should have attacked George Harry Storrs. The police drew a blank. There was no indication that Wilde had a belligerent nature; quite the reverse—the consensus was that he was "a quiet, reserved man," which tallied with the assessment on his army discharge papers.

Item. Trying to find someone who had seen Wilde carrying a knife. Again, a blank. (It may be worth mentioning that for some reason—perhaps simply because the name appealed—the long, honed knife used in the attack on James Bolton and Gertrude Booth was referred to, by both police

officers and counsel, as a "Bowie knife," which it certainly wasn't.)

Item. Having the knife and Wilde's clothing examined for bloodstains. Maybe because the police were less than satisfied by the performance of Dr. Carter Bell, the Cheshire county analyst, in the proceedings against Cornelius Howard, it was arranged that the senior Home Office analyst, Dr. William Willcox, should carry out the test. Pierce traveled down to London, and handed over the weapon and the garments to Willcox in his laboratory at Saint Mary's Hospital in Praed Street, Paddington.

The analyst's report, delivered to the headquarters of the Cheshire Constabulary within a week, made the following points:

Though there were no bloodstains visible to the naked eye on the outside of the jacket, tests showed human blood in two places on the right sleeve; it was not possible to tell the exact age of the stains, but they had been there for some months. There were large bloodstains on the lining in the right sleeve; one of the stains was submitted to the relatively new serum test, and showed a positive reaction, indicating that it was of human blood; the stains appeared to have soaked through from the outside, since they were much more marked on the side facing the cloth. Willcox would go no farther than to say that the blood on the lining of the waistcoat, both back and front, was mammalian; he believed that the stains on the front had been caused by contact with some bloodsmeared object thrust between the waistcoat and the wearer's shirt. He found no blood on either the trousers or the knife.

Inspector Pierce's most important task was to try to establish a connection between Mark Wilde and the American Bullock revolver, which had been locked in a safe at constabulary headquarters since the acquittal of Cornelius Howard. Pierce left the gun where it was, but acquired four others, two of which were very similar to the useless weapon left at Gorse Hall. At the same time, he asked William Leah to seek the assistance of the Worcestershire police force in tracing men who had served in the same battalion as Wilde but were now, like him, on the reserve; they were to be asked

whether they remembered Wilde's owning non-service firearms.

Pierce himself traveled to Dover, taking with him the four revolvers.

The commanding officer of the Third Battalion of the Worcesters passed him on to the adjutant, who interrupted preparations for maneuvers on Salisbury Plain to call a parade at which, first, soldiers who had known Private Wilde were ordered to take one pace forward, second, the rest of the battalion were dismissed—and third, the remaining soldiers were told to take a further pace forward if they recalled seeing Wilde with firearms that were not service issue.

Only one man moved from the ranks. The adjutant allowed a minute or so to elapse, but no one else stepped forward. The solitary soldier was told to remain where he was, and the rest of the men were dismissed.

Pierce was allowed to use an office in the administration block. There he interviewed the soldier, who was a lance corporal called Frank Fowles. Though Fowles had been away from the Midlands for a good many years, he had not managed to rid himself of the nasal tones of that region. He had an agricultural face, and his fair hair was parted straight down the center.

Pierce's heart must have sunk when the soldier started off by saying that of the 500 men in the battalion when it was overseas, more than half had revolvers. Most of the weapons, Fowles added, had six chambers. And something else: he could remember only a single revolver that had a ring attached to the base of the handle.

One can surmise that, at this point, Pierce was frightened to ask the vital question: Who owned that particular weapon?

But when he did ask it, the answer was the one he had hardly dared hope for:

Mark Wilde.

Fowles remarked that he and Wilde had been good friends. He went on to give more details about the revolver: it was one of the relatively few five-chambered weapons, the words "American Bullock" were stamped on it, there were scratches on the barrel, and the mechanism was defective.

Thinking back, he said that he had first seen the revolver in Wilde's possession when the battalion was in Malta: some time in 1906, it must have been. He recalled seeing Wilde taking it to pieces on several occasions, and once Wilde had spoken to him about it, asking if he knew anyone who might be able to mend the spring. In the early autumn of 1908—September, would it have been?—anyway, not long before the battalion sailed from Malta to England—he, Fowles, had been handed the revolver by Wilde and had fired it.

This last point worried Pierce, who had scoured the Manchester gunsmith's report on the revolver used at Gorse Hall, and remembered every sentence of it—in particular now, the one saying that the weapon was useless.

Was Fowles sure that he had actually fired Wilde's gun?

Certain, the lance corporal said; he remembered it as if it were yesterday.

Pierce asked the adjutant and a military policeman to come into the room before he produced the four revolvers. Without hesitation, Fowles picked up one of the two that resembled the American Bullock. At Pierce's request, the witnesses scratched their initials on the gun.

Before starting the long journey back to Dukinfield, Pierce got Fowles to write and sign a statement; he also arranged for him to remain behind when the battalion moved to Salisbury Plain.

Pierce had been back in Dukinfield only a short time when he had to take another trip, this time to West Bromwich, the Staffordshire manufacturing town a few miles from the boundary of Worcestershire. Leah's request for assistance had brought a result. The Worcestershire police had located a man called George Higley, who had left the army at about the same time as Wilde and was now a porter on the London & North Western Railway.

Interviewed by Pierce, he stated that he was in the same company as Wilde, and had first got to know him in January 1903, when the Third Battalion of the Worcesters was stationed in Bermuda. It was a couple of years later, when the Battalion was in Jamaica, that he saw Wilde with a revolver; he saw the weapon several times after that, both in Jamaica and

Malta, and on three occasions helped Wilde take it to pieces, oil it, and put it together again. He remembered some details about it—chiefly that there were indentations on the barrel.

Once again, Pierce displayed the four revolvers, noted a correct identification, and obtained a statement.

Back to Dukinfield; but the inspector's travels were not over yet. His next port of call was Liverpool—specifically, the main bridewell in Dale Street. There he was introduced to a recently recruited constable called Samuel Wellings, who had left the Worcesters in April 1909, four months after Mark Wilde, whom he had not known well. Wellings, an exceedingly tall, hook-nosed man, said that he remembered catching sight of a revolver in the box at the foot of Wilde's bed just a day or so before Wilde's time was up. He had picked up the weapon. "What are you doing with this?" he had asked Wilde, and had been told: "It is no use as the spring is broken." Wellings reckoned that he had held the revolver for only a minute; but still he had noticed defects in it other than the broken spring. He recalled that there was a name above the cylinder—"American" something or other . . . Bulldog or Bulwark or Bullock.

Pierce laid the four revolvers on a table—but before he could explain the purpose of the display, Wellings picked up one of those that resembled the American Bullock and said that it was similar to Wilde's.

With the constable's statement in his pocket, Pierce caught the next train to the Stalybridge "joint" station, then walked to Dukinfield. He was not required to go on another long journey until a fortnight later, when, after collecting the real American Bullock from constabulary headquarters, he traveled down to London to meet an aide to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Frank Fowles, George Higley, and Samuel Wellings had also come to the office, but they were kept in an anteroom until the DPP's man called them in one by one. There were now five revolvers for them to choose from. Each of the men pointed at the American Bullock.

The last important task for Pierce was to arrange an identification parade in Knutsford Gaol. The date fixed was Monday, 22 August. Mrs. Storrs—still in deep mourning—Marion

Lindley, Mary Evans, and Eliza Cooper were driven through the gates at midday. Colonel Hamersley and William Leah were waiting in the exercise yard to escort them to a small room adjoining a larger one that the governor had made available. Meanwhile, Pierce and Brewster were ensuring that the preparations covered all Leah's expectations. Mark Wilde, out of his prison uniform and wearing a dark suit and cap, was one of thirteen men composing the lineup. (Were the other twelve constituents convicts in mufti?—there seems no way of telling.)

Mary Evans, the cook, was the first to be ushered into the large room. Ignoring Brewster's instruction to walk along the line, she marched straight across to Mark Wilde and touched his shoulder. Back in the small room, she told Pierce that she was sure that the man she had indicated was the murderer.

It was Maggie Storrs's turn next. Not unusually since the night of 1 November of the previous year, she was in rather a state, so Colonel Hamersley offered her his arm. When she got to the door, however, she seemed about to collapse, and the chief constable shook his head at Brewster. The Dukinfield inspector walked across and gently asked Mrs. Storrs if she would mind looking at the thirteen men to see whether any of them resembled her husband's killer. She glanced along the line, shook her head, and was helped to a chair in the small room.

Now Marion Lindley was brought in. She walked along the line; then back part of the way. She placed her gloved hand on Mark Wilde's shoulder. Back in the small room, she said that the man she had touched "resembled" the murderer.

Last of all, Eliza Cooper was asked to look at the men. As positive as the cook, she made a beeline for Mark Wilde, touched him delicately on the chest, then scuttled out of the room. She said: "That man is more like the man I saw at Gorse Hall than was Cornelius Howard."

So everything was ready.

Just over a week after the identification parade, at seven o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, 30 August, a crowd started to congregate outside Knutsford Gaol; about an hour

later, it was augmented by hundreds of children who stopped on their way to school—but, by then, there were some constables around, and the juvenile gawpers were sent packing.

The door within a door opened at nine sharp, and Mark Wilde, perhaps thinking that he had earned remission for good behavior, sauntered out. He had taken no more than a step or two when he found himself sandwiched between William Leah and William Brewster. Unless the third important William in the Gorse Hall investigation, William Pierce, had a more pressing engagement, it seems a shame that he was not allowed to meet Mark Wilde; it was like *Hamlet* without the prince.

Brewster manacled Wilde's wrists in front of him. Then: "I am about to charge you with a serious offence," the inspector said, "and I caution you that you need not say anything, but that if you do, it will be taken down in writing and given in evidence. The charge is that you, Mark Wilde, feloniously and of your malice aforethought did kill and murder George Harry Storrs by stabbing him at Gorse Hall, Dukinfield, on the night of 1 November, last."

"Well, I'm not guilty," Wilde answered. "And that is all I have to say."

With the crowd following, the three men walked to the railway station. They boarded the 9:14 to Manchester, where they changed stations and caught a train to Dukinfield, which they reached at quarter-past eleven. A cab was waiting to take them to the police station.

Wilde was led to a cell and given a meal. By that time, a specially constituted court was ready. Once again, word had got round Dukinfield and Stalybridge amazingly quickly; the chapel-like room was packed. Leah requested a remand for a week, explaining that he did not want the committal proceedings to start until after the arrival from London of the representative of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the request was granted.

Then Wilde was driven back to Knutsford Gaol and lodged in a different cell from the one he had left only a few hours before.

Seven days later, he was returned to Dukinfield for the

committal proceedings. (Anticipating the large crowds, Superintendent Croghan had written to Leah on 2 September, "In my opinion, 17 constables will be required for the occasion, 5 of which could be supplied from this Division"; and Leah, after checking up on where Croghan intended to place the constables, had arranged for the additional manpower.) The proceedings lasted two days, Tuesday and Wednesday, the sixth and seventh of September.

It was just like old times. William Underwood, the mayor, sat in the center chair on the bench. Seward Pearce was in the same place in the well of the court that he had occupied during the committal of Cornelius Howard. And Edward Theophilus Nelson, the fiery black barrister, was once again involved in the Gorse Hall case, as the lone defender of the second man to be charged with the crime.

At a quarter to eight on Wednesday night, William Underwood announced that the accused would be sent for trial at the next Chester assizes. If there was any consolation for Mark Wilde, which is doubtful, it was that he would not have to wait too long for the final, perhaps fatal, decision: the assizes were due to start in the last week of October. Till then, as prisoners on remand were not required to work to help pay for their keep, he would live a life of leisure in the rural tranquillity of Knutsford.

CHAPTER SIX

ANOTHER TRIAL

OCTOBER 1910 WAS A VINTAGE MONTH FOR MURDER trials—indeed, one can reduce the period by half and confidently refer to *the* red-letter fortnight for connoisseurs of crime. On Saturday the 22nd, after a five-day trial at the Old Bailey in London, the expatriate American doctor, Hawley Harvey Crippen, was found guilty of poisoning his wife Cora (or, to use her stage name, Belle Elmore) with hyoscine. And on the following Monday, Mark Wilde entered the dock in Court Number One at Chester Castle to stand trial for the stabbing of George Harry Storrs.

A reporter asserted that "the crime at Gorse Hall, now nearly twelve months old, grips with unabated firmness the interest of the public, and this week fills the minds of men as much as when, on the morning of 2 November 1909, the whole country was thrilled with the news of the outrage."

The judge, Mr. Justice Horridge, kept everyone waiting for half an hour—including, one gathers, the four men who were to flank him on the bench throughout the trial: on his right, the high sheriff, ornamental in black velvet levee dress and with a sword buckled to his side, and the chaplain; on his left, his marshal and clerk.[1]

Sir Thomas Gordon Horridge, who was fifty-three, had been appointed to the King's Bench only a few days before and was trying a case for the first time. He was a pudding-faced man who peered out from beneath undergrowths of eyebrow; his extravagantly large ears proved that, physiog-

1. Judges of assize were also served by a butler and a cook, the latter to ensure that no poison was included in his master's diet.

nomically speaking, quantity is no indication of quality, for he was decidedly deaf. A native of the Lancashire cotton town of Bolton, where his father was a manufacturing chemist, he began his career as a solicitor, and then, in 1884, switched to the bar. Aided by family connections, he built up a successful practice on the Northern Circuit, specializing in commercial law, and took silk in 1901. But it was as a Liberal politician that he made his name with the public: in the general election of 1906, he fought the East Manchester constituency and achieved victory by a spanking majority over Arthur Balfour, who had been Conservative prime minister until the month before. He did not seek reelection in 1910, and the Liberal lord chancellor made him a High Court judge—which caused quite a fuss among those who were against using the bench as a reward for political services rendered.

At the trial of Mark Wilde, two things were noticed about

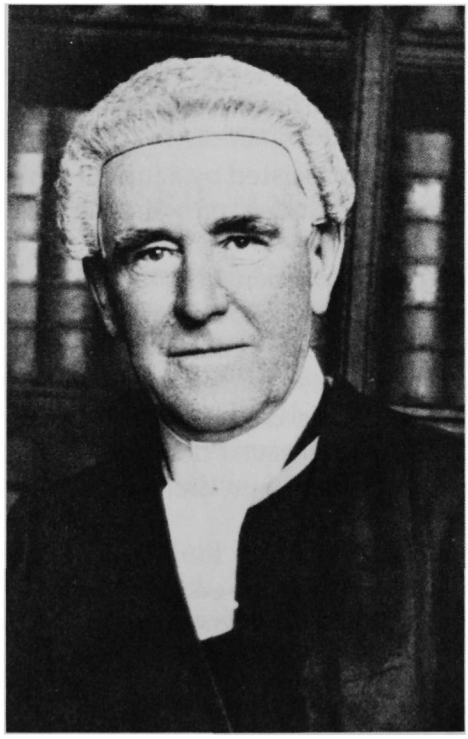


Fig. 21. Mr. Justice Horridge.

the newly appointed judge. First, he had a mannerism of twisting his face into a sort of grin, a *rictus sardonicus*, giving the impression that he was amused by something that had been said; counsel and witnesses who joined in the fun were quickly rebuked. Second, he wrote in his notebook every answer given by every witness: not just an indication but the verbatim testimony. This reiteration of the shorthand-writer's work helped elongate the proceedings into what is said to have been the longest trial ever held at Chester.

Several descriptions by reporters are here blended into one: "The prisoner, dressed in black, stepped smartly into the dock when his name was called and stood to attention in a soldierly manner, chest out and shoulders thrown back. His long, thin, white face, crowned with a tuft of light hair, showed unmistakable signs of emotion."

Those spectators—and there were many of them—who had attended the trial of Cornelius Howard must have experienced déjà vu as they watched Francis Williams rise and listened as he opened the case for the Crown. The presence of Ellis Ellis-Griffith, again Williams's junior, may have added to the feeling.

Edward Nelson, unassisted by a junior, took copious notes as Williams repeated much of what he had said back in March.

Counsel are said to "open high" when they stress, even exaggerate, evidential points; but Williams certainly couldn't be accused of that when he dealt with the evidence of the Gorse Hall eyewitnesses. Some members of the legal profession considered that he descended so "low" that the four women could have been saved the trouble of traveling all the way from Kents Bank. "When these witnesses are called, he said,

> they will no doubt be cross-examined—and very properly—as to whether they did not identify on a previous occasion another man as being the man whom they saw at Gorse Hall. They undoubtedly did so, and—as I am instructed—the explanation is that there is now, and was at the time of Cornelius Howard's arrest, a great similarity between him and the man who now stands before you. I understand that that similarity is not so striking now as it was at

> the time when Cornelius Howard was arrested, as time has passed and Howard has put on flesh. If you are satisfied that there was a striking resemblance between Howard and the prisoner, it establishes this—that it was some person of that appearance, some person of that likeness, who committed the murder; that one of these persons committed the murder—and of these persons one has proved an alibi.

Williams drew attention to the blood on Wilde's clothes, the discovery of the cartridges at his home, his ownership of two revolvers, one of which was like the weapon left at Gorse Hall, and his use of a knife that could have inflicted the wounds on George Harry Storrs. "Is it possible," he asked in conclusion, "that all these coincidences should occur and be nothing more than mere coincidences?"

The feeling of déjà vu persisted, perhaps increased, as the four women who had seen the murderer gave evidence.

Though Williams had said relatively little that was new in his speech, he had taken a considerable time saying it; and, of course, he had started rather late because of the judge's unpunctuality. This meant that the luncheon adjournment was called following the examination-in-chief of Mary Evans, the first witness.

Cross-examining her, Edward Nelson emphasized (as he did with all the eyewitnesses) that Wilde was the second man to be identified as the murderer. Narrowing his questions to a particular point, he drew attention to the fact that the prisoner had a mole under his right eye, although no such mark was mentioned in the description of the culprit circulated by the police. (Nelson hammered at this point, but it seems to have been invalid: the four women could hardly have been expected to notice a small mole—so small that it was barely visible in the court.)

Eliza Cooper was confident that Mark Wilde was the man she had seen at Gorse Hall—but in cross-examination she admitted that she had previously been "positive" about Cornelius Howard. Nelson left it at that.

Mrs. Storrs was taking an unconscionable time recovering from the shock of suddenly becoming a widow. Dressed in mourning, including a long black veil, she was helped to the

witness box by her brother-in-law. (James, incidentally, was not a witness at the trial but attended every day.) Even in examination-in-chief, she teetered on the edge of a breakdown; and when Nelson started questioning her, she came close to hysteria.

Asked what she had said on different occasions about Cornelius Howard, she protested: "How can I remember these things? Have I not lived a lifetime since that night? You forget what I have gone through."

But Nelson persisted. Turning to the window-breaking incident, he asked her to recall the exact words she had used in describing what happened. Her voice shrill, Mrs. Storrs replied: "It is all down in writing, and it is not fair to press me in the matter."

"Did you say you saw the barrel of a gun through the hole in the window?"

"Well, if you have it in writing, I said it," she cried. Turning to Mr. Justice Horridge, and sobbing now, she pleaded for the cross-examination to be stopped.

"Mrs. Storrs, you must try your best to help us," the judge said kindly. "This gentleman has a painful duty to perform. It is very sad, we know."

A few more questions from Nelson; replies rather than answers from Mrs. Storrs. Then she again turned to the judge. "Why am I to be persecuted thus?" she demanded tearfully.

She got no sympathy from the bench, however, and a few moments later, when Nelson had resumed, her eyes closed and her head lolled onto the side of the witness box. The reporters, among others, were getting a trifle bored with Mrs. Storrs by now: "yet another fainting fit," one of them noted, perhaps murmuring "ho-hum" as he scribbled.

Dr. William Willcox (who, for a reason that will be mentioned soon, must have been feeling rather anxious at the snail's pace of the proceedings) hurried forward and applied a restorative.

Nelson cut short the cross-examination, and Williams asked that Mrs. Storrs should be allowed to go home. Mr. Justice Horridge said no to this.

As soon as her aunt had been helped out of the court,

Marion Lindley entered the witness box. She did not stay there long. Nelson's job was really done when, after she had said that Wilde "resembled" the murderer, she admitted that at the earlier trial she had said she was "positive" that Cornelius Howard was the man. .

Now it was Dr. Willcox's turn. There is a difference between an "expert witness" and a witness who is expert at giving evidence; Willcox was both. He did not confuse the judge and jury with scientific jargon, but used simple terms to describe his findings regarding Wilde's clothes and the knife. Nelson contented himself with just a couple of questions, getting the analyst to say that he had found no blood on either the trousers of the suit or the knife.

Francis Williams then asked the judge to let Willcox return to London. Mr. Justice Horridge had turned down the request to release Mrs. Storrs, but this second application was a different matter: Willcox was required as a prosecution witness at the trial of Ethel le Neve, Dr. Crippen's mistress, at the Old Bailey the following day.[2] He was allowed to leave.

Three other witnesses—including Detective Sergeant Albert Lee—were called at the end of the first day, but only one of them gave important evidence. This was Samuel Wellings, the demobilized private in the Worcestershire Regiment who was now a member of the Liverpool police force. Despite fierce cross-examination, the hook-nosed constable did not budge from his assertion that the gun found at Gorse Hall was the property of Mark Wilde. His only uncertainty—which tended to add weight to the rest of his testimony—was about the name on the side of the weapon: he could not say for sure whether Wilde's revolver was called American Bullock or American Bulldog.

Second day: Tuesday, 25 October

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2. After a trial lasting only a few hours, Ethel le Neve was found not guilty of being an accessory after the fact of the murder of Mrs. Crippen. Incidentally, Mr. Justice Pickford, who presided at the trial of Cornelius Howard, was one of the three judges who turned down Crippen's appeal against his conviction; Mr. Justice Channell, who sentenced Mark Wilde to two months' imprisonment for the attack on James Bolton and Gertrude Booth, was another; the third—and most senior—was Mr. Justice Darling, the "joking judge."

Fig. 22. A newspaper artist's impression of principals in Mark Wilde's trial.

The reporters had watched Mark Wilde closely on Monday, and some of them felt confident in saying that he had a "characteristic attitude" when sitting in the dock: "leaning forward, almost motionless, and listening intently to the evidence."

The first witness was another man who had served with Wilde in the Worcesters. Shown the gun left at Gorse Hall, Lance Corporal Frank Fowles said: "I identify it as the revolver I saw in the possession of the prisoner."

During the examination-in-chief—which was conducted by the junior Crown counsel, Ellis-Griffith—Fowles catalogued the points that added up to certainty: "The extractor spring which works the trigger is broken, and the name on the revolver is the American Bullock. There are several indentations on the left-hand side. The knob of the ramrod is missing, and the ramrod is bent at the end. There is also a ring in the butt."

After that, the judge's interruption seemed redundant. "Are you sure," he queried, "that this is the revolver you saw in the prisoner's possession in Malta?"

"I am quite sure," Fowles replied.

In cross-examination, apparently seeking to show that the soldier had read about the murder and approached the police (if so, so what?), Nelson asked: "Do you read the newspapers?"

"No, sir."

Someone in the well of the court remarked in what he thought was an undertone: "Like Mr Balfour"—referring, it seems, to the former prime minister's contention (made since by every single member of parliament) that he did what he believed was right, not what others tried to sway him to do.[3]

Nelson put the stock question for witnesses whose evidence appears incontestable: "Are you a man who never makes mistakes?"

"Everybody makes mistakes at times," Fowles allowed.

"Do you remember, while you were in Barbados, arresting a man for being drunk, and after a trial you had to apologize and say you had made a mistake?"

Fowles was livid. "That is not true, I swear it," he said. And if is *was* untrue, just a shot in the dark by Nelson, then it was a disgraceful method of trying to discredit a witness.

George Higley, the soldier turned railway porter, was the last of the three witnesses called to prove Wilde's ownership

3. When the Countess of Oxford and Asquith (wife of the Liberal politician who was prime minister from 1908 until 1916) published her memoirs, which received much attention in the press, she sent a note to Balfour: "My dear Arthur, I do hope you do not mind the reference to yourself in the book. Yours ever, Margot," and got the reply: "My dear Margot, What book? Yours ever, Arthur."

of the revolver. The exhibit was passed to him, and he identified it at once. Francis Williams told him to enumerate the gun's distinguishing features—but Nelson interrupted, asking that Higley describe the revolver without looking at it. So the porter laid the American Bullock on the ledge beside him before doing as Williams had asked.

Nelson's interruption was misguided; after all, Higley had seen the weapon at the DPP's office and handled it during the committal proceedings: the fact that he was able to tally its characteristics showed only that he had an average memory, not that he had seen the gun in Wilde's possession. Williams made the most of Nelson's indiscretion, using it to suggest to the jury that Higley's evidence about the state of the gun was as important as his evidence that Wilde had owned it and that he himself had "messed about with it" when the Worcesters were overseas.

"Now look at the revolver. What do you find?"

"There are indentations on the left side here."

"Are those the same indentations you saw on Wilde's revolver?"

"The very same, sir."

"Look at that ramrod. Is it slightly bent or not?"

"Slightly bent upwards."

"Is there a knob to it?"

"No, sir."

"You said that the spring was broken. Is the spring of that revolver broken?"

"It is, sir."

"Is that revolver in the same condition or not as the one you saw in Wilde's possession?"

"In the same condition."

"You have said that is the same revolver?"

"Yes."

"Have you any doubt about that?"

"None, sir."

Nelson had dug himself a hole, and there was no way in which he could get out of it in cross-examination.

The next witness—and the final one on the subject of the revolver—was Alfred Pickford, the Manchester gunsmith

who had examined the American Bullock soon after it was found at Gorse Hall and had since been shown the ammunition taken from Wilde's home.

Pickford had managed to prize the cut-down cartridge from the chamber. This was handed to him; also the nose-end of a bullet that had been found in a box in the kitchen at 48 Robinson Street.

Williams: "Will you compare the head which you took from the American Bullock revolver with the piece of the service rifle bullet?"

"They are identical in every respect," Pickford said after examining the two bits. Well, not *quite* identical: "The only difference is that the lead has been removed from the one found in the American Bullock. They have been cut to practically the same length."

The court adjourned for lunch before the cross-examination of the gunsmith.

Despite some obstacles along the way, Nelson made a little progress:

"One set of cartridges would serve a good many revolvers?"

"That is so," Pickford agreed—then appended a non sequitur: "I should add that I have never seen indentations like the marks on this revolver."

Pretending that that hadn't been said, Nelson went on: "Anyone can buy service cartridges exactly the same as those produced?"

"That is so."

"You have seen them before like this?" A poorly worded question to which the gunsmith replied:

"I have never seen a bullet cut up in that fashion."

Then there was a long, tedious, and unresolved argument between Nelson and Pickford as to whether the ramrod was bent up or down. At last changing the subject, Nelson asked: "Do you know as a fact that the territorials get these service bullets?"

"They are served out to them."

Nelson resumed his seat; but the judge wanted to know, "Supposing that that revolver was being used to frighten

anyone. Put it towards the jury. (It is not loaded, gentlemen.) Could they see that it had a cartridge inside it?"

Thinking that the question should have been put to the jury, one of the members piped up: "We cannot see anything, my Lord."

As Pickford was handing back the exhibits, he noticed that a small screw was missing from the revolver. A search was made on the floor of the witness box and round about, and the gunsmith turned out his pockets. But there was no sign of the screw.

Still tutting at "someone's carelessness," Mr. Justice Horridge allowed Pickford to leave.

Francis Williams was extremely circumspect in his examination of James Bolton, for fear of bringing in extraneous matter that was prejudicial to the prisoner; his questions gave the impression that Bolton had simply met Wilde in Early Bank Road and taken a knife from him. Even so, Nelson objected. The objection was overruled by the judge.

In cross-examination, however, the black barrister made the elementary mistake of referring to the struggle while seeking to raise doubts about Bolton's identification of Wilde. As he made to sit down, Mr. Justice Horridge asked:

"Now, Mr. Nelson, was that cross-examination to suggest that it is not the prisoner's knife?"

Not seeing the trap, Nelson replied: "It was, my Lord."

"Then, Mr. Williams, I am afraid you are at liberty to go into the subject." To the jury: "This evidence you must not take as affecting the case at all. You must try not to let it prejudice your minds."

Hardly able to contain himself, Nelson submitted that no evidence could be given about any article unless it was found on the accused when he was arrested—clearly nonsense.

Mr. Justice Horridge explained why the evidence was admissible.

Taking another tack, Nelson complained: "The knife was never found at Gorse Hall—but a considerable time after the affair at Gorse Hall."

"That is a matter for comment to the jury afterwards," the judge said, and nodded to Williams to reexamine. So the full story of the incident in Early Bank Road came out; also details

of the parade at which Bolton and others identified Wilde. Gertrude Booth and two of the witnesses against Wilde in the Early Bank Road case also gave evidence.

The jurors' minds were brought back to the night of the murder when Dr. Thomas Williams entered the box. Nelson tried to make capital out of the fact that William Willcox had found no blood on Wilde's trousers:

"How would you account for blood getting on the floor, and the assailant's trousers not smeared at all, considering that the deceased was over him, as it were, and that there were chest wounds?"

The doctor answered only one part of this rather involved question: "There would be dripping of blood from the chest wounds, but that would run down the victim's clothing."

"Don't you think that, in the struggle, the blood from the cut on the deceased's left hand would smear the assailant's clothes as far down as the trousers?"

"I do not see why his trousers should necessarily be marked with blood."

(As yet another indication of the small world of Stalybridge, Mark Wilde was a patient of Dr. Williams's in February 1910. He was suffering from what the doctor diagnosed as paralysis of the right wrist, a condition that the doctor reckoned had been present for about two months. There were any number of possible causes, he thought—lead-poisoning, excessive drinking, pressure under the arm-pit, even lying on a hard bench with the arm pinioned by the body—but he was unable to specify any one of them, and the trouble was just as bad after a week's treatment, when he advised Wilde to go to the infirmary. Incidentally, in view of evidence still to come, it is worth noting that Dr. Williams had no recollection of seeing a blemish on Wilde's face.)

The last important witness on Tuesday was Detective Inspector William Pierce, a picture of sartorial elegance in his black frock-coat and silver-colored "bunch" tie. But there were too many things to ask him; so after he had read aloud Wilde's statement, by which time it was half-past six, Mr. Justic Horridge ordered that the examination should continue the next morning.

Third day: Wednesday, 26 October

The picture reconstituted. Most eye-catching, William Pierce, wearing a fresh starched collar, in the witness box; the tall figure of Ellis Ellis-Griffith, junior Crown counsel, who ticked the margin of the prosecution brief with a gold pencil as he led the inspector through his evidence. Ellis-Griffith had the face of a mediocre prize-fighter: his nose looked as if it had been pummeled; his lips were thick, and the bottom one protruded. Out of court, people admired the fifty-year-old barrister's thick, dark, wavy hair; but when he was appearing before a judge, his wig hid all but the thick wings. Though a fine speaker (in 1886, his last year at Cambridge, he had been president of the Union), his style of oratory was best suited to the political hustings. He was wearing his stuff gown for the last time today: tomorrow it would be announced that the Lord Chancellor had appointed him a King's counsel, and he would don a gown of silk.

He questioned Pierce about the first visit to 48 Robinson Street and the second visit when Wilde's trousers and the ammunition were found. Then:

"In prisoner's statement there is a reference to his having been in a fight on 1 November?"

"That is so."

"And have you made any inquiries since, in order to discover whether there *was* a fight in which he was engaged on the night of 1 November?"

Before Pierce could answer, the judge, fearing a breach of the hearsay rule, butted in: "I was anticipating that question, and I think it unsafe to admit it in that form."

Francis Williams got up and said: "I shall adopt the same course now as I have throughout this case, that where there is any doubt I would rather not press it."

The judge: "I think possibly there *is* a way this evidence may be admitted, but I think it is dangerous."

"My Lord, I will not press it," Williams said, "although, if I may say so respectfully, it is arguable."

"I too think it is, but it is far wiser for the prosecution not to press it."

Cross-examining, Nelson concentrated on Pierce's second

visit to Wilde's home, and elicited that the inspector had gone to the house because Wilde had told him about the ammunition in the kitchen and the pair of trousers.

Asked if he had spoken to Wilde's sisters, Pierce said that he could not remember.

"You seem to have a very convenient memory," Nelson sneered.

Williams was on his feet at once. "I submit that that is a very improper remark to make," he protested.

Nodding, the judge said: "Mr. Nelson, any remarks you have to make, you should make to the jury. You must not say things like that."

Having rebuked defense counsel, Mr. Justice Horridge turned to the witness and asked why it was that he had not said in his examination-in-chief that he had collected the items from the house after Wilde had told him where to find them.

"It was in the depositions of the police court proceedings," Pierce pointed out.

"I don't care anything about that," the judge said querulously. "You have been in charge of this case. It has been your business to get it up."

"I try to be scrupulously fair."

"Well, I will give you an opportunity of explaining to the jury why you did not give this in your examination-in-chief."

"I think Mr. Ellis-Griffith asked me, 'Did you go to the house and search it?' and I answered, 'Yes.' And in my evidence in the court below—"

The judge interrupted: "I am not dealing with that. We have not got the depositions before us. If you say it entirely escaped your memory, we will accept that, but I should like you to make any explanation you like of the matter."

Pierce repeated what he had just said.

"Do you realize the importance of this?" the judge asked sternly.

"I certainly do, my Lord."

Not before time, Ellis-Griffith came to the rescue of the inspector, saying that the omission may have been due to the way he put the question.

Mr. Justice Horridge said: "I think it right that I should call the attention of the jury to it," and several of the jurymen nodded at this.

Nelson rose to ask one final in-case-the-point-has-been-missed question: "During the time you were getting up this prosecution, has the prisoner always been ready and willing to give you any information you have asked him for?"

"Yes," Pierce replied.

Ellis-Griffith indicated that he did not wish to reexamine, and the inspector left the court a very unhappy man.

Emma Wilde, the prisoner's mother, was quite out of place among the witnesses for the Crown. At the committal proceedings, the prosecution, not wanting any gaps in their case, had called her to give evidence, and presumably Edward Nelson had afterward insisted that she remain in the prosecution ranks at the trial so that he might *cross*-examine her, thus allowing him to ask her leading questions. (The same applies to the two following witnesses.) Chester was the farthest she had ever traveled from Stalybridge, and she was dressed for the occasion in her Sunday-best: a green three-quarter-length coat over a black velveteen costume, a brown fur tippet, and a wide-brimmed straw hat.

Ellis-Griffith was again responsible for examination-in-chief.

"Did you see your son on the evening of 1 November?"

"Yes, sir."

"What time did he come home that night?"

"I could not be sure."

Mr. Justice Horridge interposed: "About what time?"

"I should think it would be getting on towards ten o'clock."

"What did you say to him when he came in?" Ellis-Griffith continued.

"He had told me he was going out—that he was going to the Ashton Hippodrome—and when he came in again I knew that it was not late enough for him to have been there. I said, 'Hello, Mark. Thou's not been to the Hipp. Where hast been?' He said, 'Down Ashton, and I got in a scrap.' And I said, 'Where?' And he said, 'You knows the pub above the lodg-

ing-house?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Well, there.' I said, 'Thou goes in some nice places, Mark,"

"Did you notice his face?"

"When I looked at him, blood was trickling from the mole on his face. And he had a scratch on the side of his face, by his left eye."

"Did you notice any other blood or marks on his face?"

"No, of course not."

"Did he remain in the house?"

"I think he went to have a drink after. I told him if I were he I would go to bed. He said, 'Oh, I'm all right. I'll not be long.' I told him his father would carry on with him for being like that. He would know he had been fighting."

"When did he come in?"

"Oh, he was only out a few minutes."

"And did he then go to bed?"

"Yes, it was getting towards eleven o'clock by that time."

In answer to further questions, Mrs. Wilde said that on the morning of 2 November she noticed a spot of blood on her son's muffler, and washed it. When Mark came down to breakfast, he was in his shirt-sleeves, and she saw blood on one of the elbows. She said: "Look at thee shirt, Mark." "Oh, it's nothing," he replied. She advised him to take the shirt off, saying that if his father saw the blood he would know that Mark had been fighting; she washed the shirt the following day.

Cross-examining the most helpful prosecution witness he would ever come across, Edward Nelson asked first about the night of 10 September. Emma Wilde said that Mark did not go to work that night because he had had some words with his father; he was back and forth to the Astley Arms, across the road from the house, until about nine. Then he said: "My father has told me to leave home, and I will go away." He went out, and soon afterward a railway worker came to ask where he was. Mrs. Wilde said that she then went across to the Astley Arms and brought her son back to the house; but still he refused to go to work. He returned to the pub, and she met him at closing time and pleaded with him to come home. He walked away,

and she did not see him again until the next morning. She remembered that a young woman called Kate Kenworthy, a neighbor with whom Mark was friendly, was in the house several times during the evening, last of all at about ten.

Nelson asked: "Your son had a mark on his left cheek when he came home from the army?"

"Yes, it was bad, he having an abscess there. It was running from the time he came home in April."

"Did the abscess heal?"

"Yes, but a mark was left by the lance."

"Had he gone to the infirmary?"

"Yes."

"When was that?"

"About the 8th or 9th of February this year."

So here, according to Mrs. Wilde, was another distinguishing mark that the women at Gorse Hall had not noticed. What with the mole under his right eye, the abscess on his left cheek, and his near-white compexion, it would seem that Mark Wilde resembled a Harlequin circus clown on the night of the murder.

Turning to the police inquiries about Wilde's trousers and the revolvers he had brought with him from Dover, Nelson coaxed Emma Wilde into saying that Inspector Pierce and Inspector Brewster called on 25 June. According to her, one of the detectives, she couldn't remember which, said: "Oh, we had Mark out last night, and he showed us where he had thrown the revolvers. By the way, is this one of them?" The detective produced a revolver, and she said: "No—Mark's was not as big as this, and it hadn't a ring at the end."

Moving back in time, Nelson asked: "Is it true that you had always been telling him to get rid of the two guns?"

"Every time I dusted the mantelpiece I told him to get shut of them as I didn't want them there. He only laughed at me."

"Do you recall the night of 1 November, when he came in and said he had had a scrap with a man?"

"Yes."

"Were the two revolvers on the mantelpiece that night?"

"Yes, and they were there for a week or two after then."

Holding up the knife as if it were Excalibur, Nelson asked: "Have you ever seen your son with a weapon like this?"

"I have never seen him at all with a knife like that."

Returning to the question of the revolvers, Nelson asked: "Is it true that after the Gorse Hall murder you frequently requested your son to get rid of them?"

"Yes, that's true. The reason I did was because somebody got hold of them and pointed them in the house and said, 'I wonder if it was like this at Gorse Hall?' It upset me. I said, 'For goodness sake, get without them, Mark.'"

Nelson saved an important card—nothing like an ace; perhaps not even a picture—until the end. He asked Mrs. Wilde if she remembered something that had happened on the Wednesday before the trial.

"I brought downstairs Mark's khaki army trousers to measure them so as to get him some new clothes."

"The clothes that he has got on now?"

"Yes, those are they."

"Did you search the pockets of the khaki trousers?"

"I stretched them out on the table to measure them, and I heard something in one of the pockets bang on the table. I felt in the pocket and there was this piece of his revolver." Mrs. Wilde handed an object up to the judge, who examined it, then passed it to counsel, saying that it was the "revolving portion of a barrel" of a six-chambered revolver.

Emma Wilde's performance was convincing, but it would appear that some of her testimony differed from what she had told the police. Francis Williams asked permission to read her statement, but Mr. Justice Horridge said that he was not prepared to treat her as a hostile witness.

A murmur of expectation, of excitement, swayed around the court as the name of Cornelius Howard was called out. He was wearing a bottle-green suit and looked very fit; his face was pink, probably from sunning himself on Blackpool beach. But his stay in the witness box, only five minutes or so, was a disappointment to the spectators. He told Ellis-Griffith that he had put on a lot of weight since his arrest for the murder of George Harry Storrs, and he agreed with Nelson

that he had been identified as the murderer by the four women at Gorse Hall. And that was about all.

Howard was replaced in the witness box by Thomas Lockwood, a cousin of Mark Wilde's; he worked as a piecener in a cotton mill, his job being to keep the frames filled with twists of cotton and to join together broken threads. He offered a little assistance to the prosecution; more to the defense. He remembered that between ten o'clock and half-past on the night of 1 November, he had met Wilde at the corner of Binns Street, near Wilde's home. He had said: "Where have you been?" and Wilde had replied: "Down to Ashton, looking for Kate [Kenworthy]." Lockwood testified that during 1909 he had lodged with the Wildes, and that he recalled seeing two revolvers, one of which had a hollow cartridge in a chamber; the weapons were still in the house about a week after the

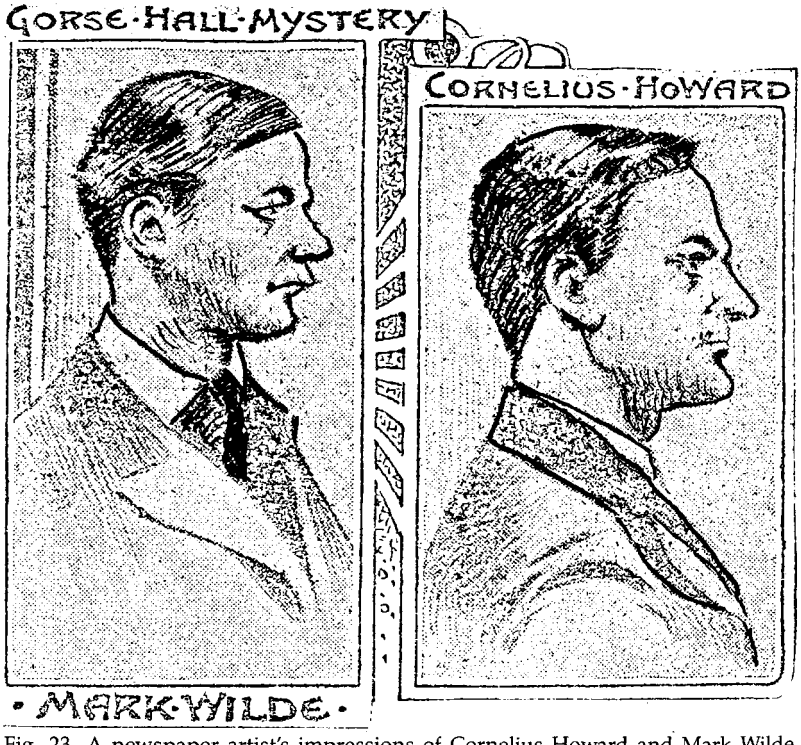

Fig. 23. A newspaper artist's impressions of Cornelius Howard and Mark Wilde during the latter's trial.

murder at Gorse Hall, and many a time he had heard Mrs. Wilde complaining about them.

As soon as Lockwood had left the court, the spectators got an unexpected bounty. Edward Nelson asked for Cornelius Howard to be recalled and placed beside the prisoner, so that the jury might see how alike or unlike they were. This met with the approval of one of the jurymen, who said that he had already suggested that this should be done.

It was getting dark by now, and Mr. Justice Horridge ordered the javelin men to ignite the gas-lamps. When Howard reentered the court, Nelson told him to go into the dock—but the judge wasn't keen on this:

"I don't like to ask you to do that, Howard," he said. "After all, you are an acquitted man."

"It will do anywhere for us, my Lord," an obliging juror said.

"I am against asking Howard to go into the dock," Mr. Justice Horridge reiterated.

Eventually it was decided that Howard and Wilde should stand side by side near the solicitors' desk, facing the jury box. The judge, the members of the jury, counsel—and, indeed, everyone else—carefully compared the two men. At the request of a juryman, they turned so that their profiles were toward the jury box. Then Howard walked out of the courtroom and Wilde returned to the dock.

After brief evidence from supernumerary witnesses, Francis Williams rose to say: "That is the case for the prosecution, my Lord."

Earlier in the day, Mr. Justice Horridge had announced that he intended to sit late, so though it was now nearly seven o'clock, no one was surprised, and the spectators were delighted, when he nodded to Edward Nelson, who turned to Mark Wilde and told him to enter the witness box.

Wilde had been well rehearsed by his barrister. Perhaps a little too well: at times, he began answering the questions before Nelson had finished asking them.

Nelson kept things pretty much in date order: Wilde's release from the Worcestershire Regiment; the incidents in

and around 48 Robinson Street on the night of 10 September; the pub-crawl instead of the intended visit to the Ashton Hippodrome, and the fight near the Bluebell Inn, on the night of 1 November (adding to his statement, Wilde claimed that he had a conversation with a barmaid in the Wine Bar in Ashton); the arrival of the police on 23 June, the questioning, the arrest.

After having the American Bullock handed to the prisoner, Nelson asked: "Did you ever own that revolver?"

"No, I didn't."

"Did Lance Corporal Fowles ever fire your own revolver?"

"He never saw me with a gun that would fire."

"During all the time you had your revolver in the army, could it be fired?"

"No."

The American Bullock was given back to the court attendant, who, at Nelson's request, then held up the knife.

"Do you know that knife?" Nelson asked.

"I have seen it in court."

"Has it ever been in your possession?"

"I have never owned it or handled it."

According to Wilde's version of what happened at Knutsford Gaol on 22 August, the other men on the identification parade were "all of a different stamp."

Three final questions:

"Were you at Gorse Hall on the night of 1 November?"

"No, sir. I was at Ashton-under-Lyne or Stalybridge."

"Did you know the late Mr. Storrs?"

"Well, I have seen his photo since the murder, but I didn't know him before then. I had never spoken to him or worked for him."

"Have you ever been in the house or grounds of Gorse Hall?"

"No."

Edward Nelson rested. Mark Wilde was taken back to the dock—but he stayed there only a moment or so, while the judge adjourned the proceedings, and then was escorted down the steps to the cells.

The instant Mr. Justice Horridge and his four companions

had left the court, there was a loud buzz of conversation; as the javelin men herded the crowd through the doors, almost the sole topic of discussion—quite heated among some of the spectators—was whether the man now accused of the murder resembled the man who had been acquitted of it.

If Mr. Justice Horridge spoke of anything other than the case when he returned to his room, one can be pretty sure what it was. He was a passionate follower of the sport of kings. Though there was no racing on the Roodee that week, there was an important meeting at Newmarket, at which the Cambridgeshire, the first leg of the "autumn double" of handicap races, had been run that afternoon. No doubt Mr. Justice Horridge had backed one of the runners and arranged for the result to be obtained for him. If he put his money on Christmas Daisy, which had won the race the year before, he would have been happy—and his marshal relieved that the evening would not be sour—because the horse won again, at generous odds of 7-1.

Fourth day: Thursday, 26 October

Before Mark Wilde underwent cross-examination, Mr. Justice Horridge ordered that Lance Corporal Frank Fowles should be recalled. How was it, the judge asked, that he had been able to fire the revolver in Malta if, as he said, the spring would not work properly?

The soldier explained: "The trigger at that time would occasionally work although it was out of order."

Alfred Pickford, the gunsmith, was also recalled, and the judge asked him in some detail about the American Bullock. Pickford said, among other things, that if a certain screw was out, the revolver could not be fired. Which screw? Well, it turned out to be the one that had been lost on Tuesday. It had been found overnight among Francis Williams's papers, and Crown counsel, full of apologies, had handed it to the attendant in charge of exhibits on Wednesday morning. But now the damned thing was lost again. Another search was made, but there was no sign of the wanderlusting screw.

After some irritated muttering, Mr. Justice Horridge demanded that Pickford *assume* that the screw was in position.

The gunsmith now went back on something he had said earlier: if the screw was in its hole, the gun *could* be fired, he said; although the trigger-spring was broken, it could be operated by the fingers.

The judge: "I think this is very important. The jury may not agree with me, but I want them to see this."

So Pickford went up onto the bench, where everyone had a clear view of him, and outlined the mechanism of the revolver. He demonstrated that the chamber could be revolved by holding it in a certain position.

As soon as the gunsmith had left, several policemen, William Pierce among them, went down on their hands and knees, searching for that screw. But in vain. They moved away as the prisoner left the dock and walked to the witness box.

Right at the start of the cross-examination, Francis Williams sought to show that the revolver Wilde had bought while he was overseas was the American Bullock.

"Did the gun have five chambers?"

"You have the six-chambered cylinder belonging to it," Wilde replied (referring to the cylinder that his mother claimed to have found in his army trousers the previous week). In answer to further questions, Wilde said that the revolver was hammerless and missing both its trigger-guard and the ring at the base of the handle; though it had a ramrod, this was not like the one in the American Bullock, the important difference being that there was a knob on the end.

"Had your revolver any indentations or marks upon the left side?" Williams asked.

"No, it had no marks at all."

"Then it was as unlike the revolver which the army witnesses described as any two revolvers could be to each other?"

"The only thing in which they were alike was that mine was nickel-plated and with a black handle."

"Was the spring broken?"

"I am not an expert on revolvers. I cannot say exactly what was broken. If anyone asked me what was wrong, I would say the spring was broken or damaged."

"You will agree with me that it would be impossible for anyone who had seen the revolver in your possession to describe it as having the head of the ramrod gone? That is all wrong?"

"I should say they have read the accounts of the revolver found at Gorse Hall in the papers."

Mr. Justice Horridge was displeased. "That is not a reply to the question," he told Wilde. "Do yourself justice."

But Wilde showed that he was not frightened of the judge. "I do think it is possible after the lapse of time," he retorted. "I think they are speaking from descriptions they have seen in the papers. They would not notice the absence of a trigger-guard because they are soldiers and are accustomed to seeing triggerguards on their rifles."

Francis Williams saw an opening. "Then they would all the sooner have noticed if there was none," he pointed out.

"No; they were so used to trigger-guards."

"Higley has said that there were indentations on the left side of the barrel?"

"I should think he has a good memory if he could remember it six years back."

"That would not be memory if the marks had never been there," Williams riposted.

The questioning continued. Wilde said that he had bought the gun while he was in Jamaica, giving another soldier a shilling or two for it. He had not known then that it was out of order, but had found out the same day.

"Did you go back to the man who had sold it to you?"

"I saw him and told him that it was damaged, and he said it was not when he sold it to me."

"Were you angry at having been 'sold'?"

"I didn't like being had."

Asked if he remembered the name of the seller of the revolver or of anyone who had witnessed the transaction, Wilde said: "I can't tell you for certain. I could give you names, but they might be wrong."

"Tell me a name."

"I could tell you two—a man named Salter and another named Oakley."

"Salter?"

"It is no use saying his name because he is dead—but Oakley is alive."

"When you were arrested, why didn't you tell the police that your revolver was bought from some men, among whom you thought were Salter and Oakley?"

"I did not know what I was saying, because they came to me with suggestions of two attempted murders and a murder."

"When did you first realize that the identity of the pistol was a matter of importance to you?"

"When I was in Strangeways. It was about June."

Williams pounced: "If that is so, why did you destroy the revolver long before June?"

"Because my mother asked me to. She was upset."

"Was she upset because of the Gorse Hall murder or not?"

"No, it was simply because of having the revolvers in the house. I took them to pieces and disposed of them in different places. I didn't want anyone to get hold of them, because I was not going to pay money for them and let somebody else have them for nothing."

"Do you tell the jury that your action had no connection with the fact that a pistol had been left at Gorse Hall?"

"It had no connection at all—only what I have told you. My mother didn't like it."

"The police notice about the revolver was issued on 30 November—and that was about the time you began to dispose of the pistols?"

"I threw them away some time about November or December, yes."

"You must have noticed that the pistol left at Gorse Hall was entirely different from the one in your possession?"

"It was," Wilde insisted.

"And you knew that if you showed your weapons to the police, that would immediately prove that the one left at Gorse Hall was not yours?"

"There was nothing said about me having done anything at Gorse Hall then."

The judge intervened: "That is not an answer. If you had

shewn the revolvers which you had, anybody could see that neither was the revolver left at Gorse Hall."

"Well, they were left on the mantelpiece all that month."

"You can answer that afterwards, but you must answer the questions put to you. Anyone seeing the revolvers you had could see at once that they were not revolvers which corresponded to the description you had seen in the notice?"

"Yes. Except for the nickel-plating."

Returning to the fray, Francis Williams dealt with the evidence of Fowles, Higley, and Wellings. Wilde insisted that all three men were wrong. So, doubling back, Williams said:

"I put it to you that you must have realized in November that the question of the identity of the revolver was all-important to you?"

"To me it was not."

"Did you tell anyone that you got it from Salter and Oakley?"

"I did not, because I thought it would be sufficient for my friends—people at home—to come forward."

"You knew the names of two of the men, and one was alive?"

"I was not certain of them."

"Did you tell anyone about them so that inquiries could be made?"

"I did not."

"Did you mention the names to your solicitor?"

"No."

"What sort of revolver did you buy at Dover?"

"It was something like the one you have got here. I knew it was no good when I bought it, but the man asked me to give him a drink for it, and I gave him sixpence or sevenpence."

"When you destroyed the pistols, did you destroy them both?"

"I told you before that I did. I destroyed them carefully so that no one else could get them."

"Williams looked incredulous. "You gave a mere sevenpence for a revolver which was of no use and destroyed it so that it should not be used by anyone else?"

"Somebody might have got it mended."

"How would that have hurt you?"

"I didn't want anybody to have anything out of me."

"Why didn't you try to get rid of them by selling them?"

"I didn't think anyone would buy them."

"But *you* had bought them."

"But because I had bought them does not mean anybody else would be so silly."

Still looking perplexed, Williams changed the subject to the cylinder that Wilde's mother claimed she had found in his khaki trousers. Wilde said that he recognized it as being part of the revolver he had bought in Jamaica because of its size and some marks on it.

Williams asked: "Is the suggestion that you left that behind by mistake?"

"Yes, an oversight."

"It must have been in the pocket for a very long time—since December, in fact?"

"Yes."

In answer to questions from the bench, Wilde said that one chamber of the revolver he had bought in Jamaica was blocked up: "It had a cartridge or something in. It was a cartridge that had been cut off—the brass and lead part. I tried to work it out but couldn't. I remember cutting down another cartridge to make a pen-knife out of it, and I tried a piece of that cartridge in one of the two revolvers."

When Francis Williams was allowed to continue, he put the piece of cartridge found at Wilde's home into a chamber of the American Bullock. He pointed out that it fitted.

But Wilde contended, "The piece slipped through the muzzle of my own revolver. I think it had a bigger bore than the Gorse Hall one."

The judge intimated that it was time for the luncheon adjournment. Surprisingly, since Williams had no other questions to ask about the revolvers, he did not try the piece of cartridge found at 48 Robinson Street in the cylinder from the khaki trousers. Does this omission mean that the prosecution had already done so?— that Williams knew that Wilde's last answer was probably true?

After the break, Crown counsel asked a series of questions about the Early Bank Road case. Wilde stuck to his story that he was innocent of the crime and had never seen the knife until it was shown to him by Inspector Pierce.

Coming to the night of the murder, Williams noted: "You say in your statement that you were at the Wine Bar in Ashton. Have you made any effort to find out whether the barmaid, whom you now say you spoke to that night, remembered the occurrence?"

"No, because I was in prison."

"But you had your solicitor?"

"Yes, I told him."

Williams asked about the fight by the Bluebell Inn: specifically, about how it had ended. Wilde answered: "I reckon the man had insulted me by telling me to get out of the bloody way. When the fight finished, both of us were exhausted. We fought in Lancashire fashion—hitting, kicking and wrestling. A proper Lancashire fight."

Without trying to hide his distaste, Williams said: "Kicking— is that what you call a Lancashire fight?"

"Yes."

"Well, I hope for the sake of Lancashire, that kicking is not considered proper fighting. I don't know; I am not a Lancashire man."

Wilde said that he took off his jacket and waistcoat before the fight began.

"Was all the blood on those articles of clothing caused by that fight?" Williams asked, believing that he had found an opening.

"All of it."

"The only blood upon you when you had finished your fight was on your muffler and shirt?"

"And, of course, my face."

"You have heard it said that there was blood on your jacket and your waistcoat," Williams pointed out. "How do you suggest that got there?"

"From my nose bleeding."

"There was some blood at the back of the coat, you know."

"Yes, that was through pulling it down with my fingers. My

nose was bleeding, I tried to stop it with my fingers, and then I pulled my waistcoat down at the back."

"You cannot tell us the names of any persons who saw you that night?"

"No, because it was dark for one reason, and I could go to Ashton a hundred times and not see a person I knew."

Ending the cross-examination, Williams asked:

"The man at Gorse Hall is described as being between five foot six and eight inches. What is your height?"

"Five foot five and a quarter in bare feet."

"He is said to have been slightly built. Are you slightly built?"

"Yes."

"He is described as having fair hair. Have you fair hair?"

"Yes."

"Long features?"

"Well, I'm not a judge of that."

"Sallow complexion, then?"

"Nor that."

"Slight mustache. Have you a slight mustache?"

"Yes, I have."

"Twenty-six to twenty-eight. How old are you?"

"Twenty-eight."

Williams sat down, having questioned Wilde for more than four hours. But Wilde's time in the witness box was not quite over yet. Mr. Justice Horridge wanted to know if he had any idea of the identity of the man he said he had fought.

"No, my Lord."

"Have you seen him before or since?"

"No, my Lord, I haven't."

In answer to the final question from the judge, Wilde said that in November he was "afraid of being picked up to be identified, because any light-haired men were being taken to the police station. When they were sent away, the police gave them tuppence for their trouble."

It was nearly five o'clock by the time Wilde returned to the dock.

Edward Nelson then called a cluster of witnesses, all but one of whom gave evidence about the revolvers Wilde had

brought home when he left the army and/or about his movements on the night of the window-breaking incident at Gorse Hall.

A young woman named Kate Kenworthy, who had worked in several cotton mills as a cardroom hand, had lived in Cartwright's Building, opposite the Wildes, until the beginning of 1910, when she moved to Oldham; until the move, she had been very friendly with Mark Wilde, seeing him practically every evening. In the witness box, she said that she saw Wilde—but only in the visual sense—four or five times on the night of 10 September: on one of these occasions—sometime between eight and nine—he was going into the Astley Arms; on another—at about ten—he was talking to his mother on the pavement outside the pub. In cross-examination, Kate Kenworthy admitted that she and Wilde had almost always gone out on the first day of the month, when he drew his reserve pay, but that she had not seen him on 1 November.

Kate's twenty-one-year-old brother James, a laborer, said that he was "walking out" with one of Wilde's sisters, and so was a frequent visitor at 48 Robinson Street. He asserted that he remembered seeing two revolvers on each side of the clock on the mantelpiece in the kitchen after the murder at Gorse Hall.

There seems to be no record of which of the sisters James Kenworthy was walking out with, but it certainly wasn't Harriet, who was only fourteen, the second youngest of the Wilde's children. She stated that her brother brought home two revolvers when he left the army, and she said that she recalled that "someone got hold of one of them after 1 November and remarked, 'I wonder if it is anything like the one found at Gorse Hall?'" Francis Williams showed her the American Bullock and asked if either of the revolvers was like it. "Yes," she replied, "but the one I am thinking of was less. And it had no ring. And the thing underneath [the trigger-guard] was missing."

One of Harriet's elder sisters, Mary Ellen, who was a weaver, gave similar evidence. In cross-examination, she said: "One of the pistols was little and the other was a big

one." She agreed that though her mother "continuously objected" to the revolvers being on display, they were not removed from the mantelpiece until November 1909.

Francis Williams: "And that was the date of the Gorse Hall murder?"

"Yes, sir."

Mary Ellen Wilde was keeping company with a laborer called James Stott, who lived with his parents eight doors away. He said that he saw Mark Wilde four times between eight o'clock and half-past eleven on the night of 10 September; however, in cross-examination he admitted that he was not asked to give evidence until a year later, and that he did not remember the night until he was reminded of Wilde's tiff with his father. According to his recollection, "one of the revolvers on the mantelpiece was a very little one. I don't think it would be above three inches. The other was a bit bigger but not much—about three and half inches, I should say."

Thomas Homer, the chubby-cheeked landlord of the Astley Arms, said that Wilde was one of his regulars: "There were few days he did not call in." Homer claimed that he remembered the night of 10 September—"if that was the time Mark missed going to work": Wilde was in the pub between five and six and again at about eight; "he was also in later, when he should have been at his work." In cross-examination, it turned out that Homer had tried to be too helpful to Mark Wilde when the police first called on him, for he had then stated that Wilde was in the Astley Arms at the time of the murder.

The last defense witness, John Clarkson, at first appeared to be an odd-man-out, unrelated to Wilde and simply someone who had served with him in the Worcesters and seen him with a revolver that was four or five inches long and not a bit like the American Bullock. But in cross-examination it came out that Clarkson was a cousin of Wilde's.

Francis Williams, who had watched Clarkson closely, asked him if he had ever seen the American Bullock before it was shown to him during his examination-in-chief.

"No, never," Clarkson replied.

"I noticed that directly it was put into your hands today you said that it differed from the prisoner's revolver."

"Yes, sir; quite correct."

"*But you had not looked at it,*" Williams said, for once raising his voice. "I suggest to you that you had not looked at it when you said that it was different."

"Oh, but I had, sir."

"Well, the jury saw," Williams commented. Perhaps he planned to ask several more questions, but the answer to the next one would have changed his mind: "How many chambers were there in the revolver your cousin had?"

"Five, sir." An unexpected bonus for the Crown.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

On that unhappy note for the defense, Edward Nelson closed Wilde's case.

It was now seven o'clock. After consulting the clerk of arraigns, Mr. Justice Horridge announced that the court would reconvene half an hour earlier than usual the next morning, in the hope that the trial could be completed that day.

Later, in his room, the judge discussed with the clerk what was to be done, with the Gorse Hall trial taking up all his time at Chester; he was due at the Carmarthen assizes on Monday, then Brecon, and lastly Swansea. It was agreed that when he had finished the Welsh towns on the circuit, he would return to Chester and dispose of the rest of the cases in the calendar.

Fifth day: Friday, 27 October

At half-past nine on the dot, Edward Nelson rose to make the closing speech for the defense.

Without pulling any punches, he condemned the police, the eyewitnesses at Gorse Hall, and the three men who had identified the American Bullock as Wilde's. He asserted that "the affair began in mystery" with the window-breaking incident of 10 September:

> All we really know about it is that Mr. Storrs thought that the man outside the window was an armed burglar. Armed burglar

> forsooth! Do armed burglars come at a comparatively early hour of the evening? Do armed burglars fire a gun before they enter the house? Do armed burglars come and disturb people when they are all alive and awake? Do burglars come and tell a man to "hold up your hands or I'll shoot"? No, no, no! The man who was at Gorse Hall on 10 September with a gun was not a burglar. The very words, "Hold up your hands or I'll shoot," show that he went there with a specific object. They show that the man had some personal grudge against Mr. Storrs or somebody in the house. He went there to wreak his vengeance upon one person.

Turning to the night of the murder, Nelson said: "We are told that Mr. Storrs met the intruder and that the man cried out, 'Now I've got you.' If those words suggest anything at all, they show that at last he had met the man for whom he had been waiting, no one knows how long. The opportunity for which he had been looking had at last arrived of satisfying his vengeance. Another suggestion arises from the words, and it is this: Were they the words of a stranger to a stranger? Some sort of connection between the murderer and the murdered must have existed for some time. The man came to Gorse Hall to meet one man—and he met him. Is not that mysterious?"

Rather unfairly lumping the four women at Gorse Hall together, Nelson declaimed: "Those women—those women who were so confident in their identification—forsook poor Mr. Storrs and fled. When they came back, he was dead or very nearly dead."

Nelson made much, of course, of the women's identification of Cornelius Howard, then pooh-poohed the sure identification of Wilde by the two servants: "It is beyond the comprehension of most men that women, having positively pointed the finger of guilt at Howard, should come here and say that Wilde is more like the murderer than Howard. What of their powers of observation? What of their judgment? There is a greater chance now of their being mistaken than when they identified Howard. It was wicked of them to give such evidence, and it was wicked of them to come and ask you, the jury, to believe them."

Having sought to devalue the worth of direct evidence,

Nelson claimed that "circumstantial evidence is not evidence upon which a jury should convict, especially in a case of life and death, unless every single link in the chain is there."

Dealing with Wilde's account of his movements on the two important nights, Nelson said: "The whole mighty strength of the Cheshire Constabulary has been concentrated against him, yet they have not been able to contradict him in one iota. If Mark Wilde was the man who murdered Mr. Storrs, he would have put his clothes away; he would not have worn them and gone about the town in them."

"I ask you to believe the prisoner's story," Nelson said, approaching the end of his speech. "He left the witness box unshaken. I submit that this is a case of mistaken identity—both as to the man and as to the revolver—and I ask you to say that the prosecution has entirely failed to substantiate the charge."

It was noon when Francis Williams began his closing argument for the Crown.

Unlike Nelson, his tone was conversational; he made no effort to be heard by anyone other than the judge and the jury. All the more striking, then, that as he became engrossed in his argument, he picked up the knife and made staccato movements with it, causing the light to flash on the blade; at other times he prodded his desk with the point of the weapon, apparently oblivious to what he was doing or to the sound he was making.

"I wish I could share the view put forward by Mr. Nelson," he said, "that the prisoner has clearly made out his innocence. Alas, I have to invite you to a different conclusion. And there is a mass of circumstances in this case, all pointing to one conclusion and one conclusion alone."

Williams drew the jury's attention to the "missing" defense witnesses.

There was the railway worker who was said to have called at 48 Robinson Street on the night of 10 September when Wilde had not turned up at the station: "This man has been about the court this week, yet he has not been called."

Then there was Oakley, who, according to Wilde, had either sold him the revolver in Jamaica or played some part in

the transaction: "He, of course, would know the revolver and would be able to say that the Gorse Hall firearm was not the same. But if it *was* the same revolver, Wilde would certainly not want to call him."

Third, there was the barmaid at the Wine Bar in Ashton-under-Lyne. Wilde had said nothing about her in his statement, but had claimed during his examination-in-chief that he had conversed with her when ordering a drink on the night of the murder. "One wonders," Williams mused, "why this woman was absent from the witness box. Yes, one wonders."

Last, there was John Wilde, the prisoner's father. During Williams's examination of Emma Wilde, he had in effect challenged the defense to call her husband. Now he pointed out: "John Wilde has been in court all this week—but the defense dared not put him in the witness box." (John Wilde gave evidence at the committal proceedings, but he did not help his son's cause at all. He claimed that the written statement produced by the police differed from what he had told them. When he was asked to cite differences, much time was lost by his refusal to admit that he could not read; he said that he could not make out the words of the statement because he had left his spectacles at home, but after trying on several pairs belonging to people in court, had to admit defeat. In the end, the statement was read out, and—when William Underwood, the magistrate, had put the fear of God in him—he said: "I do not suggest that the statement has been interfered with, but I don't remember using the words 'I cannot swear'." Answering questions about the night of 10 September, he said: "There was no reason [why Mark should not have gone to work] except a few words he had with me, and that was scarcely a sufficient reason. Mark came back to the house about half-past eight [only a few minutes after the quarrel]." He stated that the larger of his son's revolvers—the one that might have been the American Bullock—had five chambers.)

Referring to the witnesses the defense *had* called, Williams noted that "nearly every one of them was more or less connected with the family—but, even so, their evidence did not cover the material time on the night of 10 September." He

contended that these witnesses had been "tutored," and reminded the jury that John Clarkson, seemingly frightened by the accusation that he had not looked at the American Bullock before saying that Wilde's revolver was different, had stated that his cousin's gun had five chambers. "The prisoner declared that the revolver which he had in Jamaica had six chambers, and you will remember that his mother produced a six-chambered cylinder which Wilde said belonged to it. The prisoner is a remarkably intelligent man. His language, you will have noticed, is well-chosen. He certainly had enough intelligence to know—if he were innocent—that the production of his revolvers would furnish conclusive proof that he was not at Gorse Hall. An innocent man would have kept the revolvers; a guilty man who had left one revolver at Gorse Hall would destroy the other. And that is exactly what Mark Wilde did. What the protests of his poor mother failed to accomplish the police notice regarding the revolver accomplished on or soon after 30 November."

Williams said that he entirely dissented from the view that the man who was at Gorse Hall on 10 September must have been there on 1 November:

> Are you, at any rate, satisfied that the prisoner was not and could not have been at Gorse Hall on the first occasion? I do not think that you can be.
>
> There is no doubt that the weapon left at Gorse Hall was defective. Mark Wilde's revolver was defective—there is no doubt about that. Mr. Storrs bled when he was murdered—the prisoner at the bar came home with blood on his clothes that night. In the revolver found at Gorse Hall there was a piece of cartridge— prisoner's revolver had a piece of cartridge.
>
> As far as Mr. Storrs knew, he hadn't an enemy in the world. So it is from the purpose to say that no one can point to a motive. *Somebody* did it. That Mr. Storrs lies dead, murdered at Gorse Hall, is not a matter of controversy. What was the motive in James Bolton's case? Bolton was attacked, and no motive could be assigned.
>
> Mr. Nelson said that this case is full of mystery. Gentlemen, I think we shall see that the great mystery, the inexplicable mystery, if the prisoner at the bar is not the guilty man, is the number of circumstances that point to him and say: "Mark Wilde, thou art the man."

The luncheon adjournment had come in the middle of Francis Williams's speech, so when he sat down at quarter-past two, he had been speaking for an hour and three-quarters.

Now it was time for the penultimate act in the trial: the judge's summing-up.

Mr. Justice Horridge suggested that the jury should concentrate on five aspects of the case: the identification, the revolver, the cartridges, the knife, the bloodstains on Wilde's clothes.

After opining that there was no way of knowing whether the window-breaking incident was connected with the murder, he said:

> I do not think there is anybody who absolutely saw the prisoner on the 10th in the Astley beer-house at the crucial time.
>
> I imagine that you will agree that the ladies from Gorse Hall gave their evidence extremely fairly and with no desire to say more than what they believed to be correct. If ever there was a case in which they had to be careful, it was a case where already the wrong man had been got hold of. Their identification brings us to the point that the prisoner belongs to the description of the man who did the murder.
>
> But there are other evidences. There are very much more important things. The evidence of the revolver is evidence which you must consider most carefully.

Disagreeing with Edward Nelson, Mr. Justice Horridge pointed out:

> Circumstantial evidence may very often be very much more reliable than direct evidence, because if you can find a circumstance that can only be explained in one way, the circumstance cannot lie. It cannot come into the witness box and tell what is untrue or make a mistake.
>
> We cannot be certain of anything in this world, but neither Fowles nor Higley has any reason to say anything against the prisoner. They are the best of friends with him; they always have been. If you accept what they say, that is the strongest evidence you can have that the revolver found at Gorse Hall belonged to the prisoner. All three of the prosecution witnesses regarding the prisoner's revolver are men accustomed to discipline, having been

> in the army, and they could not have any object in coming and saying what they knew. I am bound to tell you that it is your serious responsibility to consider the evidence of these three men. The most important point in the case is whether that revolver was the prisoner's or not.

Now an unusual—perhaps unique—thing happened: a juryman interrupted a judge's summation. The man asked whether the army witnesses had been in contact with one another during the investigation. Francis Williams rose to say that their statements had been taken at different times and in different places (which, of course, was not a complete answer).

Mr. Justice Horridge continued, dealing now with Wilde's movements on the night of the murder. Emphasizing that the defense had not called a single witness to corroborate his account of his trip to Ashton, the judge referred to the barmaid at the Wine Bar, noting that as Wilde had said nothing about her in his statement, the police had not interviewed her. But had the defense done so?

Leaving this question in the air, Mr. Justice Horridge told the jury to retire. The time was exactly half-past four.

While the judge and jury were in their respective rooms, the talk among the spectators was subdued; the rain pelting on the skylight made more of a noise. Two javelin men carrying burners on tall sticks walked around the court, igniting the gas lamps. They had only just finished when—fifty minutes after the retirement—the cry of "jury" echoed round the court.

Mr. Justice Horridge and his retinue returned to the bench; Mark Wilde, showing no sign of tension, was escorted back to the dock; the jury filed into their box.

There were a few whispers of impatience as the clerk of arraigns read out the names of the jurymen.

Then the clerk recited:

"Gentlemen, are you agreed on your verdict? Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

Wilde got up and stepped to the front of the dock.

The foreman of the jury also rose.

"Not guilty, sir," he said.

Wilde half-stepped, half-staggered back into the body of the dock while the spectators cheered; the shrill voices of women predominated. A number of women fluttered their handkerchiefs at Wilde.

Though Mr. Justice Horridge must have known of the demonstration at the end of the trial of Cornelius Howard, he looked astonished. Then he raised his hand, and court officials shouted for silence. They had to shout several times before all the spectators were quiet. After a few seconds of dead silence, the judge said curtly: "Mark Wilde, you are discharged."

Wilde gave a slight nod, turned away, and walked down the steps from the dock, followed by the warders. News of the verdict had reached the crowd standing in the rain outside, and their cheers could be heard in the court: only for a moment, though: as Mr. Justice Horridge disappeared, the spectators started to celebrate again. They were still cheering, laughing, and shouting as they were ushered from the court to join the waiting crowd.

A quarter of an hour or so later, Marke Wilde, accompanied by his parents, sisters, some friends, and Cornelius Howard, left the castle by a side door. But at the gates he was recognized, and the crowd surged forward to congratulate him. He was hurried into a nearby hotel.

Eventually, the crowd dispersed, and the Wilde party walked through the pouring rain to the railway station, where they boarded a train to Manchester; there they caught another to Stalybridge.

It was like Mafeking Night in Robinson Street. All the neighbors were outside; there were more cheers; flags were waved. Cornelius Howard had a meal with the Wildes, then left. Later on, Mark Wilde strolled across to the Astley Arms to be treated to drinks until closing time.

The papers had their say.

In contending that the evidence against Wilde "amounted to nothing," the editorial writer for the *Daily News* ignored the testimony of Alfred Pickford, the gunsmith, that the American Bullock was the only one of its kind that he had seen: "The

revolver was of a common type, of which there might be a thousand examples. The identification of Wilde after the same witnesses had previously confidently sworn to seeing another man was worthless. Two men have been tried and acquitted for the Gorse Hall crime, a fact which points to the zeal much more than to the discretion of the police. The murder remains a mystery, the most remarkable murder mystery of modern times. We have no explanation, no theory to offer, but only astonishment for a crime which shoots with so lurid a gleam an orbit across the serenity of our ordered English life."

The *Manchester Courier* used the particular case to make a general point: "We cast no reflection on the praiseworthy efforts of the local constabulary when we suggest that the increasing number of criminals at large indicates the need of more effective methods of hunting them down than prevail at present. The permanent location of an expert detective from Scotland Yard under every local authority suggests itself as a possible improvement on existing methods."

None of the papers noted that, as far as is known, the Gorse Hall case made legal history by being the first in which two men were separately charged with, and acquitted of, a murder.

Horatio Bottomley's *John Bull* called the case "a bottomless mystery," and commented: "Isn't it remarkable that the police should have made every effort to convict two innocent men? Now, we suppose, if they discover the real criminal they will be ashamed to prosecute."

So everyone believed that the last had been heard of the stabbing of George Harry Storrs.

And everyone was wrong.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN ASSORTMENT OF VERDICTS

THREE INCIDENTS NUDGED ME TOWARD THE DECISION to examine the Gorse Hall mystery and write a book about it.

I cannot remember where I first read about the case: it must have been in an essay in some anthology or other, since oddly enough there has been no monograph. The most detailed account appears under the heading of "The Double Acquittal" in *Six Trials*, by Winifred Duke; most of the other essays—the sort of stuff that gives crime history a bad name—are just a line of illegitimate offspring, one spawned from another, none adding anything new, all repeating errors made in the earliest accounts.

In 1973, I became general editor of a new series of trial volumes; having to write the first book as a pattern for the rest, I decided that, though I found the case abhorent, the series had to begin with the most publicized English trial of recent times, that of the so-called Moors murderers, Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, at Chester Castle. I received a great deal of help from Detective Chief Superintendent Arthur Benfield, the head of the Cheshire Criminal Investigation Department, who was one of the leaders of the investigating team. One day, during lunch with Benfield and other detectives in the mess at the new constabulary headquarters, it was suggested to me that I should write a book about the Gorse Hall case. A good idea, I said; and thought no more about it.

A year or so later, I obtained from my friend James Hodge, the last general editor of the Notable British Trials series, the Gorse Hall scrapbook that someone at William Hodge & Company had compiled from press cuttings at the time of the

case. Because in those days the firm, for fear of libel, steered clear of trials that had resulted in acquittals, the case never became a title in the NBTs.

Then, at the end of 1980, I was persuaded to be the "consultant" for, and to take part in, a radio programme about the Wallace murder case, for transmission on 20 January 1981, the fiftieth anniversary of the Liverpool crime.[1] I arranged for Philip Chadwick, a prosecuting solicitor with a great interest in the case, to take part in the discussion part of the programme. Corresponding with him before the broadcast, I learned that he was a native of Ashton-under-Lyne. The subject of Gorse Hall came up. He wrote about the district: how it must have been in 1909, what it was like now. So, intrigued as much by the setting as by the case, I made up my mind to find out whether the stabbing of George Harry Storrs warranted a book.

Too many *soi-disant* criminologists choose a culprit, then arrange the facts to fit the choice. That is not my way. When I started the research, I had no ideas on why George Harry Storrs was murdered or who the murderer was. The more I delved into the case, the more my opinions grew, shifted, or changed completely; Richard and Molly Whittington-Egan, who patiently listened while I mulled over the evidence, will vouch for this.

The starting-off point for any consideration of the case has to be the window-breaking incident on the night of Friday, 10 September 1909 (*see pp. 22-23*).

A most odd affair. Consider the ingredients, as recounted to the police by George Harry Storrs:

> He was sitting by the fire, quite a way from the window, when he looked up from the book he was reading and caught sight of a "shadowy figure" outside the window;

1. People who have read my book *The Killing of Julia Wallace* may like to know that, as "Mr. X" had died shortly before, I named him for the first time in public on the programme as Richard Gordon Parry and outlined the evidence I had collected which indicates that he was the murderer.

he got up and hurried toward the window—but before he reached it, a man shouted, "Hands up or I'll shoot," and then there was a crash of glass and the barrel of a gun protruded into the room;

undeterred, George Harry continued to the window and pulled down the blind;

two shots were fired;

George Harry was all set to go out into the grounds, but his wife stopped him.

Some questions:

Was the trespasser standing with his nose to the window or did George Harry have exceptionally keen eyesight? One or the other, surely, since it was a dark night and there were no lights in the grounds; in a room lit by oil lamps, it is virtually impossible to see through highly polished plate glass, which acts as a shield, reflecting the diffused light.

Even if one presumes that the trespasser used his gun to break the window, would it not have needed a pretty hefty blow to shatter *plate* glass? There can be no sure answer to this, as we don't know the thickness of the pane or whether there was an imperfection in it.

Wouldn't most men, after having a gun pointed at them and being warned, stop in their tracks or run for shelter? George Harry did neither of these natural things but continued to the window, and the barrel, and pulled down the blind—which shows that he was brave or stupid or aware that he was in no danger.

Why were there no visible effects of the two shots that both George Harry and Maggie Storrs said were fired? As we know, the following morning the police searched the room and found neither spent bullets nor bullet holes, and no shotgun pellets; a tiny slit in the blind had clearly not been caused by gunfire. So either the trespasser fired the gun away from the room—or he did not fire at all.

Having heard two shots—or thought so—would the average unarmed man seriously think of going outside to investigate?

One supposes that Maggie's friend, Mrs. Georgina

McDonald, was carefully questioned by the police, if only because Superintendent Croghan and his subordinates were confused by the whole episode. Mrs. McDonald would have given an outsider's view of what occurred. But if a statement was taken from her, it appears to have been lost; and, of course, she did not give evidence at any of the subsequent-to-the-murder legal proceedings.

Put it no stronger than this: the ingredients of the incident suggest that it was a stage-managed tableau—an "attack" concocted in advance by George Harry Storrs.

Was it fortuitous that Marion Lindley, a bright young woman with, it seems, 20/20 vision, was away that night, or was her absence the signal for a burlesque attack to be performed?

Who could have been the shadowy star of such a production? The obvious—perhaps only—person is James Worrall, the sole male servant at Gorse Hall and one of George Harry's two good friends. There is no evidence that Worrall did not have his usual few pints at a pub that night; on the other hand, there is no evidence that he did. It would have been a simple matter for George Harry to approach the coachman, spin some tale or give the true reason for the project, and arrange a night and a time; he would have known that Worrall, as a servant, would obey instructions—and he would have known that Worrall, as a friend, could be relied upon to keep the secret. It would have been a simple matter for Worrall to leave the stables, taking with him the shotgun that he kept in the event of poaching or orchard-scrumping, creep up to the window (round the front of the house, avoiding the kitchen), make his hazy appearance at the circumscribed time, speak his line and fire the gun in the air, then hurry back home—getting there well before the handbell was rung, summoning him to the house.

If one assumes that Worrall was the "trespasser," then his suicide after the murder acquires a possible explanation. The only motive that was adumbrated for his hanging himself—and for his odd behavior before—was that he was upset by his master's death; Mrs. Storrs had assured him that he and his family would be looked after for as long as she lived, so he

had no fears for the foreseeable future. But if he knew that the window-breaking incident was a sham and felt that his vow of secrecy to Mr. Storrs was sacrosanct—and if he believed, or knew, that the incident was connected with the subsequent murder—then his mind, previously untroubled except by mundane matters that were easily solved, could well have become unhinged. He was undoubtedly a second victim of the crime, but perhaps he was a victim who knew far more about the motive for the murder than he was able to say.

If the trespasser was not the coachman, and if George Harry Storrs had no clue as to why the incident took place, he had good reason to be alarmed. But—especially considering his casual reaction to the trespass, the shout, the sight of the gun, the shooting—to say that he overreacted is almost an understatement. Not only did he request a police patrol of the grounds, but he fitted the large bell on the roof: surely a unique response to armed trespass. Remember that he could think of no sacked employee who was a likely culprit, and that, apparently taxing his mind to assist the police, he referred only to some pigeon-fancying tenants with whom he had fallen out; at a loss to explain the affair, Superintendent Croghan concluded that "*if* shots were fired," the gunman was either an idiot or a drunk. Not satisfied with simply fitting the bell, George Harry tried it out—and at *midnight*, waking people as far away as Ashton and causing the streets of Stalybridge to be almost unprotected for nearly an hour.

I think it can be assumed—and with a good deal of confidence—that George Harry Storrs was frightened *before* the night of 10 September, and that, being constrained not to reveal the reason for his fear (not even, perhaps least of all, to his wife), he fabricated an excuse for installing a bell and asking for police protection.

If one accepts that, then one of the main struts of Cornelius Howard's defense is removed.

There is no doubt that he was in Wakefield Gaol, under the name of "William Harrison," on 10 September 1909. The Dukinfield police checked this soon after his arrest in Oldham,

and I have since confirmed that he had the most cast-iron alibi possible.

But what of it?

If the window-breaking incident was a burlesque, the fact that Howard was locked in a cell twenty-seven miles away is immaterial.

He was definitely in Stalybridge from 12 April, when he left the army, until 3 July. He admitted that he saw his cousin at least twice during that period ("I may have seen him more, but I remember two"); and though he claimed that George Harry passed by without recognizing him, we have only his word for that: George Harry may have recognized him but decided that he did not want to speak to him—or perhaps there *was* a conversation.

If George Harry was frightened by something that Howard said or by something he afterward heard that Howard had said—or if he had reason to believe that Howard bore him a grudge, maybe for something that had happened while the young man was overseas—he might have taken precautions. The important point is that he had no way of knowing that Howard, masquerading under a false name, was in jail, out of harm's way as far as he was concerned, from 12 July until 7 October.

What motive could Howard have had for committing the murder? A rumor buzzed around Stalybridge after his arrest that he believed that his cousin had done him out of some money: George Harry, so the story went, was a trustee under the wills of both Mary Anne Howard, Cornelius's mother, and Ralph Howard, his father, and the administration of the two estates was not to Cornelius's liking. There seems to be no truth in this. As far as is known, George Harry played no part in the disposition of either estate. Mary Anne Howard died without leaving a will in December 1898; her husband was granted the right to administer her estate of £265 (about £7,000 in present-day terms). Ralph Howard, who died at the age of sixty-eight in February 1909, two months before Cornelius completed his army service, did leave a will; but the amount was only £32 and the sole beneficiary was his daugh-

ter Marion, who by then was married to a man named Russell. Cornelius did not get a penny.

Glyn Hardwicke, a retired solicitor who has studied the Gorse Hall case, has an interesting notion which he believes bolsters a story that went the rounds after the murder. In order that the reader may understand it, it is necessary to outline a murder case that occurred in London in 1907.[2]

At the Bayswater emporium of William Whiteley, the "universal provider," the January sales were in their final week. A goodlooking but feckless young man named Horace Rayner walked into the crowded store; he was wearing a silk hat and a frock coat, but his pockets contained nothing but a sixpenny piece, six pennies, a penciled note, and a loaded revolver. By saying that he had been sent by Sir George Lewis, the well-known solicitor, he obtained access to Whiteley's office. He was with the seventy-six-year-old magnate for half an hour. Then Whiteley emerged and told an assistant to fetch a policeman. Rayner appeared behind him in the open doorway.

"Aren't you going to come back?" Rayner asked. "Is that your final word?"

"Yes."

"Then you are a dead man, Mr. Whiteley." And with that, Rayner produced the revolver and fired two shots, one of which entered Whiteley's skull and killed him. Rayner then shot himself in the temple.

Surprisingly, he did not die, but was well enough in March to stand trial for the murder at the Old Bailey. The key to the affair was the note found in his breast pocket:

> To all whom it may concern: William Whiteley is my father, and he has brought upon himself and me a double fatality by reason of his own refusal of a request perfectly reasonable. RIP.

Rayner's counsel claimed that the defense did not have to prove that the statement was correct—it was sufficient to show that the belief had preyed upon Rayner's mind "to such an extent that it came to govern all his actions."

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2. The *Stalybridge Reporter*, normally entirely parochial except for its editorials, reported the crime in its issue of 26 January 1907.

He was found guilty; but the Home Secretary took into consideration the "peculiar circumstances" of the case and commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment. Rayner, a recalcitrant prisoner, was released on medical grounds in 1919 and died not long afterward.

Now, Glyn Hardwicke connects the Bayswater and Stalybridge murders, referring to the latter as a "carbon-copy crime." His idea is this:

> Rayner believed that Whiteley was his father. (The belief is the all-important thing—not the correctness of it.) Whiteley was not only rich but a really outstanding hypocrite who posed as one who condemned all sexual indulgence while secretly practising it himself. When Rayner confronted him and the old man refused to give him any help, he shot him. But there was tremendous public sympathy for Rayner, and for an appreciable time he became virtually a national hero. It was this, I believe, that triggered off Howard's murderous attack on Storrs.

Is it possible that Cornelius Howard believed that he was the illegitimate son of George Harry Storrs? Let us look at some facts.

Mary Anne Storrs was born in Stalybridge on 3 March 1839, so she was thirty-six when she married Ralph Howard, the son of a "gentleman," at Saint Paul's, Stalybridge, on 7 September 1875. (There seems no way of finding out just what sort of a gentleman Howard's father was. One is reminded of the true story of counsel cross-examining a snobbish witness. "What is your profession?" "I am a gentleman, sir." "Yes, but what were you before you became a gentleman?") Mary Anne was a milliner until her marriage; but, as we know, she gave up hat-making to help her husband in his butcher business, first in Southport, then at Pendleton, and finally at 6 Melbourne Street, Stalybridge. If Cornelius Howard's birth certificate is to be believed, Mary Anne gave birth to him on 11 October 1878 while she and her husband were living and working in Southport; she was thirty-nine—a fairly advanced age even now, and more so then, for a pregnancy.

George Harry Storrs was eighteen when Cornelius Howard was born—youthful, but certainly quite old enough

for Cornelius to have been his bastard, farmed off on the Howards, his aunt and uncle, maybe in return for a donation to Ralph's business. Incidentally, Ralph's father, the "gentleman," was also called Cornelius, a fact that can be looked at in two ways: on the one hand, the idea that Ralph was the surrogate father seems to be weakened by his giving the child a family name; on the other, he and Mary Anne may have thought that giving the boy the "grandfather's" name would imply legitimacy.

All the evidence indicates that the young George Harry was upright, not at all licentious, and uninterested in women until he met Maggie. But some paved roads contain potholes. One thing to be taken into account, though not stressed, is that his brother, William Henry, had a short life but an excessively amoral one: George Harry may have been tempted—if only just once—to find out whether William Henry's conception of fun was all that he made it out to be. Another point, again not emphasized, is that while William Henry got blisters from treading the primrose path of dalliance, a niece of his, a daughter of James, set foot on it once and afterward wished that she hadn't: Sarah Storrs, a spinster, became pregnant and disposed of her progeny to unknown fosterparents.

All that these two points are meant to indicate is that the Storrs family was not wholly chaste. Maybe George Harry was an unblemished paragon; maybe not. We shall be returning to the question of his sex-life later in this chapter, but for the present we might as well tidy up the discussion of whether he had a youthful, productive amour by saying that *Cornelius Howard may have* BELIEVED *that he did.* Out of the army, out of work, subsisting on his sixpence-a-day reserve pay and the meager proceeds of robberies, he might have convinced himself that the wealthy George Harry Storrs was not his cousin but his father; that he was far, far more deserving of George Harry's largesse than Marion Lindley; that as there was no way of getting what was rightfully his, he ought to exact revenge on the man who had fathered him but abdicated the responsibilities of parenthood.

Changing the subject to Howard's alibi, it will be remem-

bered that when he eventually made a statement to William Leah, he said that he was in the Ring o' Bells in Huddersfield at the time of the murder. A very dubious alibi, as it turned out. By the time of the trial, James Davies, the pub's landlord, was "certain" that he played dominoes with Howard on the night of Monday, 1 November—but the progression from perhaps to positive makes one suspicious. Despite the fact that John Robinson, the clock-mender, was pie-eyed when he gave evidence at Chester, his assertion that the games took place on the Tuesday rather than the important Monday was strongly supported by the story of the corn-duty wager (*pp. 91 and 112*).[3] It strikes me that "Sixteen-Pints-a-Day" Robinson's evidence was infinitely more believable than that of Davies. Perhaps it is wrong to suggest that a publican's trustworthiness can be gauged by the respectability of his pub, but still I think it is worth mentioning that the Ring o' Bells was a house of dubious reputation; two years after the trial, Davies was sacked by the brewers, and a year after that, at the annual licensing meeting in Huddersfield, the new landlord's application for renewal of the license was refused on the ground that "the premises were of a disorderly character."

As has been pointed out (*pp. 119*), the Director of Public Prosecutions considered that William Marmaduke Thompson was the defense's trump card. Cornelius Howard said nothing to the police about Thompson; it was Thompson himself who approached Howard's solicitor, Ralph Watts, with the information that he had had a conversation with Howard on the doorstep of the Conservative committee rooms in Huddersfield between 8:30 and 9:30 on the night of the murder.

Goodness knows why, but Crown counsel did not ask Thompson to explain what he was doing on the doorstep at least half an hour after the close of the municipal poll, with which he had been helping; the closest that Francis Williams

3. By the way, the answer to the corn-duty question did appear in the *Huddersfield Examiner* of Monday, 1 November. Or rather, the answer to *a* question on corn duty. Robinson must have been either clever or an expert on the subject, for the newspaper article was a statistics-laden examination of the effects of a tariff on German corn prices.

got to querying the time was his question concerning Howard's "I see you're busy" comment, which was hard to square with Thompson's evident unbusyness.

As far as I can tell, the police investigation into the time of the alleged encounter produced only one witness, a man named William Daniels, who said that he had spoken to Thompson at the committee rooms at about ten minutes to eight and had next seen him when he, Daniels, returned to the rooms between twenty-past and half-past nine. Clearly, this is quite useless: if Daniels was absent for an hour and a half, then Thompson could have been absent, too.

The Huddersfield police informed William Leah that "Thompson is a betting man of the low order, who deals with working men for very small amounts; there is no conviction against him, but we are satisfied that that is not his fault." Robert Senior, who ran a refreshment house next door to the committee rooms, stated: "Thompson is a man it is best to have nothing to do with; he will sell his soul for sixpence."

A rather obvious question arising from Thompson's testimony does not seem to have been asked by the police. Thompson claimed that Howard inquired about his winnings from a bet on a horse-race run that day. The horse Howard was said to have backed was Razorbill, a six-year-old that won the 3:30 race at Wetherby, the Marston Moor Steeplechase Plate, by a length; at 3-1, the horse was the favorite in a field of sixteen. Now, the 1 November issue of the *Huddersfield Examiner*, an "evening paper" that appeared on the streets in the afternoon, did not carry the result of the race, and one wonders how Cornelius Howard could have known that Razorbill had come in first.

It seems more than possible that Thompson's conversation with Howard took place (if it took place at all) before eight o'clock, when the "I see you're busy" remark might have made sense. Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that it did. Would Howard have been able to get to Gorse Hall by the time the murder was committed?

A couple of distances, some train times, and a sum:

The headquarters of the Huddersfield North Central Ward Conservative Committee were 400 yards from the railway

station, so Howard could have walked to the station in well under five minutes.

There was an 8:10 P.M. train to Stalybridge; but on the night of 1 November 1909, it did not leave Huddersfield until 8:12.

It arrived at the Stalybridge "joint" station at 8:44.

The distance from the station to Gorse Hall, via the shortest route (Caroline Street/Albert Square/the drive), was 1,416 yards. The average walking speed is reckoned to be between 3½ and 4 miles per hour. Splitting the difference to make 3¾ m.p.h.—which surely takes into account the uphill trek from the entrance gate (if Howard was the murderer, he certainly did not saunter from the station)—the distance was covered in under twelve minutes.

Twelve minutes added on to 8:44 gives a time of arrival at Gorse Hall of four minutes to nine.

It was more than a quarter of an hour later that the intruder was seen by the cook.

I would be the first to admit that this discussion of the case against Cornelius Howard is in danger of sinking from the weight of ifs and buts; even so, I believe that had some of these points been presented at his trial, the jury would have at least taken longer than twenty minutes to reach their verdict—and that the verdict might, just might, have been different.

But what of Mark Wilde?

The feeling in Stalybridge was—and, to some extent, still is—that if he had been the first man charged with the crime, he would have been convicted. Edward Nelson had the unique advantage of being able to stress time and time again that one man had been wrongly charged and that the same could be true of Wilde; and his task was simplified, of course, by the fact that the members of the jury, before they ever entered the box, were doubtful about the eyewitness evidence of the women from Gorse Hall.

There was another sort of eyewitness evidence, however. Of the three men who identified the American Bullock as Wilde's revolver, two were friends of the accused, and there

seems no reason why they should have given their evidence if they did not believe it to be true. On the face of it, they appear to have had marvelous memories for one revolver out of the many they had seen and handled during their service with the Worcesters. But it was, after all, an unusual gun—quite apart from its name, one that lingers in the mind, it was probably the most decrepit revolver that anyone had bothered to keep; and there were those unexplained indentations on the barrel.

Apropos of evidence regarding firearms, one cannot help wondering whether there was some jiggery-pokery by both the prosecution and the defense at the trial. Alfred Pickford, the gunsmith, suddenly discovered that the American Bullock could be fired; and Wilde's mother claimed that, only a few days before the trial, she had just happened to find a *six*-chambered cylinder in his old army trousers, thus supporting Wilde's contention that the gun he had when he was overseas was unlike the American Bullock, which had only five chambers. (It will be remembered that two of Wilde's allies, his father and his cousin, John Clarkson, gave the "wrong" answer about the number of chambers in his revolver.)

Wilde's explanation of why and how he disposed of his two revolvers is very hard to swallow. Taking the actual disposal first, he claimed that, though both guns were duds, he did not want anyone to have something for nothing (which, if true, revealed a wide streak of meanness). But instead of simply poking the guns into a rubbish dump or throwing them in the canal running beside the nearby Aqueduct Mill, he went to the trouble of dismantling them, and then, over a period of weeks, roved the town, dropping bits here, bits there. It isn't plausible. The dismantling and disposal *must* have been occasioned by the murder at Gorse Hall—though this doesn't mean to say that Wilde was the murderer. Incidentally, the fact that the police never found a single piece of either of the revolvers Wilde said he had thrown away is not proof that his story was untrue: the police did not put themselves out to find evidence to confirm what he told Inspector Brewster during the midnight drive. A single constable, PC

Albert Edmunds, was given the task of searching, and though he may have looked round the fields near the Ladysmith barracks, it seems unlikely that he got his boots wet when he visited the canals that Wilde alleged were the watery resting places of other pieces. (In a report, Edmunds stated that he dragged the Peak Forest Canal at 2 a.m. on 26 June 1910—doing the job at an ungodly hour, in pitch-darkness, because the police did not want their interest in Wilde to become public knowledge.)

When one comes to Wilde's explanation of *why* he got rid of the revolvers, one feels like saying, "Tell me another." It had nothing to do with the murder at Gorse Hall, he said; nothing to do with the police notice about the American Bullock that was circulated at the end of November. His mother had been imploring him since January to "get without them." So he did. The timing was merely a coincidence.

One of many. I know of no other murder case in which there were so many suspicious coincidences, and yet the accused was acquitted. Count them. The night of the window-breaking incident was the night when, after eight months of apparently conscientious employment, Wilde stayed away from work, losing his job as a result. On the night of the bloody murder, he was involved in a fight with a complete stranger, a man who was never traced and who never came forward, and got blood on his clothes. According to the women at Gorse Hall, he resembled the murderer. The American Bullock had a piece of cartridge jammed into one of the chambers—and so did Wilde's revolver. When he attacked James Bolton and Gertrude Booth (and unless there was a separate series of reason-defying coincidences, he did), he used a knife similar to the one that killed George Harry Storrs.

The seemingly motiveless, senseless crime in Early Bank Road makes one wonder whether it is salient that, according to Edward Nelson, Wilde had no motive for the Gorse Hall murder. Is it possible that he was a psychopathic Jekyll and Hyde? In almost any other context, that word "psychopathic" would worry me, because I believe that psychiatric evidence should not be allowed in law courts (since it is characteristic of

psychiatrists to see themselves as deities, with an almost—if not quite—divine right to say what they think rather than what they know; they argue from the general to the particular, often coming up with half-baked conclusions, sometimes dangerous ones). But it seems to me that the "science" of psychiatry is redundant, the textbooks and case histories irrelevant, in discussing Mark Wilde: all that is needed is a modicum of common sense. It is surely clear that he was a man of irresistible, irresponsible impulses. How else can one explain the dichotomy between his unblemished army record, coupled with the general opinion that he was quiet and reserved, and (1) the extravagant reaction of throwing in his job after the tiff with his father, (2) either the murder at Gorse Hall or the scantily provoked "proper Lancashire fight" near the Bluebell Inn at Ashton, (3) the senseless attack on the courting couple in Early Bank Road?[4]

But perhaps Mark Wilde did have a motive for the murder. Maggie Storrs thought so.

It will be remembered that one of the witnesses on Wilde's behalf was a young woman named Kate Kenworthy, who was living opposite 48 Robinson Street on 10 September 1909 but had moved to Oldham by the time the trial took place. The reason for her move was that in the late summer of 1909 she lost her job at the Aqueduct Mill and was unable to find another in the district; George Harry Storrs personally gave her the sack, telling her that she was a troublemaker. Kate Kenworthy was not merely walking out or keeping company with Mark Wilde, but was his mistress; by all accounts, he was extremely enamored of her. For the first few weeks when she was out of work, he gave her money; but this stopped after 10 September, when his only income was his reserve pay and fees for odd jobs.[5] Kate Kenworthy was forced to leave her hometown, and her relationship with Wilde came to an end.

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4. At the end of Wilde's short sojourn in Strangeways Gaol, the medical officer reported: "The prisoner has shewn no sign of insanity here whilst under observation."

5. As far as I can make out, a short time after 10 September he worked two or three days a week for about a month, helping a friend called Ellis Hague with house repairs, but was virtually unemployed after that.

From 1914, for a period of ten years, a married couple named John and Mary Jane Ellison leased Old Gorse Hall, using the immediately surrounding land as a smallholding, where they bred pigs, poultry, and goats. Every so often, the Ellisons made trips to Kents Bank to pay the rent to Mrs. Storrs and to discuss matters relating to the property. On one of these occasions, Mrs. Storrs talked about the murder. The couple from Old Gorse Hall listened, part of their attention distracted by the full-length portrait of George Harry Storrs that hid the wall above the mantelpiece. "It seemed that Mr. Storrs was looking down, nodding approval at his widow's words," Mary Jane Ellison afterward told her daughter. The gist of Mrs. Storrs's remarks was that she was convinced of Mark Wilde's guilt and that she attributed the crime to her husband's dismissal of Kate Kenworthy, "Wilde's paramour."

A final story. Until recently, there lived in Stalybridge a very old man who had been a friend of Mark Wilde's in 1909. Shortly before his death, he told his stepson that on the night of 1 November, Wilde came to his house. His face was even paler than usual, and his hands and clothes were stained with blood. He said that he had killed Mr. Storrs, and asked his friend to help him eradicate the stains. This the man did. He did not speak of the incident for more than sixty years.

I consider that the case against Mark Wilde is stronger than that against Cornelius Howard. There is such a diversity of evidence; there are so many unexplained circumstances that seem inexplicable unless one accepts that Wilde was guilty. I agree with those people of Stalybridge who say that he was fortunate in being the second man to be tried. In contradiction to what some newspapers commented at the time, if the jury had found him guilty and he had been hanged, I for one would not think that there had been a miscarriage of justice.

However—and please excuse my being equivocal—that last statement, only slightly watered down, applies also to Cornelius Howard.

But I haven't quite finished.

Is it possible that one murder case can produce, not just a pair, but a trio of likely culprits?

The two big problems in the Gorse Hall mystery, one a variation on the other, are that, first, though we can be pretty sure that George Harry Storrs was aware that he was in danger, there seems to have been insufficient reason for his feeling mortally afraid; and second, though revenge was the most likely motive for the crime, there appears to have been no sufficient basis for the ultimate vengeance.

Do the following facts go some way toward solving these problems?

> Revenge is a dish to be eaten cold.
>
> (*North Country proverb*)

George Harry Storrs may not have been Robert Innes's best friend, but the reverse was certainly true. The solicitor was one of the two men whom George Harry felt that he could rely upon, confide in.

When Innes moved from Abergeldie House to the relatively imposing Holme Lea in Astley Road, facing Stamford Park, George Harry became a frequent visitor and dinner guest.

In 1897, Innes's wife, Emma, prevailed upon him to engage a governess for their elder daughter, and in the October of that year a twenty-three-year-old woman named Maria Hohl took up the position. Her annual salary was £60, and, of course, she received full board and lodging. She ate at the same table as her employers and their guests, and occupied a room squeezed between the turrets of the house.

Maria Hohl was a fine-looking woman. The most noticeable thing about her was her blonde hair—so extremely blonde that in sunlight it appeared to be lint-white. Though she was referred to as the "German governess," she was actually Swiss, her home being at Beggingen in the German-speaking canton of Schaffhausen, the wine-producing region north of the Rhine, where her father, who had nine other children, was the Roman Catholic pastor.

Emma Innes thought that Maria was a treasure: "admirable in every way; intellectual, studious, conscientious, and reliable to the highest degree."

Apart from jaunts with her charge and visits to the Catholic Apostolic[6] church in Manchester, in the early years she did not get about very much. But then George Harry Storrs took an interest in her; at first he merely conversed with her at the dinner table, trying out his paltry German, but by about 1905 they were sometimes seen walking in the park.

In the following year, by which time the Inneses' elder daughter had been sent to London for a formal "finishing" education, Maria Hohl traveled to Oxford to take an examination in English language and literature. But her mind was troubled, and she came back to Holme Lea on the first day of 1907 without having sat the examination.

Perhaps one should discount hindsight, but people who saw her in January afterward said that she seemed to have put on weight.

Emma Innes noticed a psychological change: "She was depressed. Her dissatisfaction and humility were only spoken to me alone, but she said she felt herself very unworthy—that was a word she frequently used."

On Friday, 1 February, she went to the church in Manchester. The minister spoke to her "for the purpose of reassuring her and trying to dispel her melancholia." She refused to take communion, telling the minister that she was "unworthy." Though the minister "was not impressed that anything was wrong with her," when she had left he wrote her a letter advising her that as she did not feel worthy of taking communion at her own church, she should not accompany the Inneses to Saint Paul's the following Sunday.

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6. The central tenet of this sect was expectation of the Second Coming of Christ; the predominant hope of the followers was to be alive and well so as to meet Him when He arrived. His failure to show up caused a dwindling in the number of followers, and the sect's last important church in London (almost certainly, anywhere), which was in Gordon Square, closed at the end of the 1950s, and became the Anglican chaplaincy of the University of London in 1963; until the mid-1960s, a still-optimistic nonagenarian Apostle conducted services, usually without a congregation, from a wheel-chair in a building in Paddington.

Incidentally, the Catholic Apostolic church crops up in another celebrated murder case—one that has already been mentioned in a footnote (*p. 82*). Miss Camille Holland, who imagined that she was going to live a life of sin with Samuel Dougal at the Moat Farm, Clavering, Essex, but who finished up dead in an extempore grave in the grounds, was a regular member of the congregation at the Gordon Square church until she was smitten with the dastardly Dougal.

When she got back to Holme Lea, Mrs. Innes "spoke to her with loving affection, tried to console her, and treated her as an invalid."

The first week of February was bitterly cold. The canals froze over; just about the only unfrozen stretch was opposite the Bannerman Mill in the Crookbottom part of Stalybridge, a short distance to the east of the town hall and three-quarters of a mile from Astley Road.

In the early evening of Wednesday the sixth, Maria Hohl had high tea with the Inneses and their younger daughter. At quarter-past eight, soon after she had put the child to bed, she passed Emma Innes on the stairs. As fas as is known, this was the last time she was seen alive.

Emma Innes wrote letters until nine o'clock, when she went into the hall, a square space with a marble floor, a large stained-glass window, and stairs leading to a gallery. Noticing that the side door was ajar, she concluded that the governess had gone to the postbox against the garden wall. As she was alone in the house, her husband having gone out to a business meeting, she locked the side door before going down to the cellar to turn on the radiators. As she returned to the hall, she heard the click of the letter-box and saw an envelope fall to the mat. Picking up the envelope, she saw that her name was written on it in pencil. Inside was a note:

> Do not expect me back tonight. Noboby is to blame, only myself. It is heart rending to leave you all. Console my poor parents. Hearty thanks from a miserable sinner.

Recognizing the handwriting as Maria's, Mrs. Innes went into the garden to look for her; but it was an opaquely dark night, and she soon gave up. She put on her cloak and hastened to the cabstand at the bottom of the road; there she found a policeman, to whom she showed the note. He, and later two other constables, searched in vain until three o'clock the next morning.

The search continued as soon as it was light; but again in vain. A missing-person form was circulated, describing Maria Hohl and itemizing the clothes Mrs. Innes thought she must have been wearing when she left Holme Lea: a motor-cap, a

neck-fur, a black coat with pearl buttons, a dark skirt, black stockings, and low-buttoned shoes.

Three weeks later, at one o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, 27 February, a canal bargeman saw the body of a woman floating in the water near the Bannerman Mill. He informed the police, and the corpse, with its flesh crimpling from adipocere, was taken to the mortuary at the rear of the town hall; there it was identified by Emma Innes as the body of Maria Hohl. Apart from the shoes, all the clothing mentioned on the missing-person form was accounted for; the pockets were empty.

The inquest, held at the town hall and conducted by Albert Fearns, the coroner who would subsequently investigate the death of George Harry Storrs, caused quite a stir; the local paper, which normally allowed no more than a quarter of a column for inquests, devoted five times as much space to the proceedings, under the heading, "THE STALYBRIDGE MYSTERY SOLVED."

Four witnesses were called: Mr. and Mrs. Innes, James Mayers, the bargee; and Detective Sergeant Albert Lee (who more than two years later would find the suspended body of James Worrall).

The coroner asked Emma Innes to suggest a reason why the governess should have committed suicide, and received the definite yet contradictory reply: "It was religion and nothing else. She was humiliated on account of the failure to go in for the examination. She over-studied and over-worked herself for it, and her health was undermined."

Ignoring the second part of this theologial/educational surmise, the coroner commented: "I should say she had religious mania."

Robert Innes, who had not been asked to express an opinion, butted in: "There is no doubt about it."

Later, however, when he was requested to speak, Innes completely changed his mind. "I cannot suggest any reason for this act," he said. And, though no one had suggested otherwise, he insisted: "She was a very good girl indeed, and she was held in the highest respect by my family. She was as good as gold."

Letters that the very good girl had written to her father,

Pastor Theodor Hohl, were produced. Leafing through them, the coroner noted "two or three sentences in English. For instance, 'I feel a disgrace to all my friends and to this house, and to all who know me.' She had obviously got it into her mind that she had sinned and that she had fallen deeply."

After a short consultation, the jury agreed to a verdict of "suicide by drowning during temporary insanity."

How one wishes one knew whether George Harry Storrs attended the inquest—or, for that matter, whether he was at Dukinfield cemetery the following day, when the remains of Maria Hohl were laid to rest in Emma Innes's family vault, all expenses paid by Robert Innes.

And, more important, how one wishes that an autopsy had been performed.

I have virtually no doubt that Maria Hohl was pregnant, or believed that she was. Only slightly less surely, I think that the man with whom she had intercourse was George Harry Storrs. Apart from Robert Innes and the Manchester minister, he appears to have been the only man with whom she was ever alone.

If, shortly before 10 September 1909, a member of the Hohl family came to England, to Stalybridge, seeking the reason for Maria's suicide, sooner or later he heard the suspicions that I have just voiced. If he dearly loved Maria, as he must have done, he had a motive for murder. If George Harry Storrs found out about the inquisitive young foreigner . . . . It would be redundant to say more.

I believe that the Cheshire Constabulary might have solved the Gorse Hall mystery if, instead of devoting their efforts to building cases against Cornelius Howard and Mark Wilde, they had tried to find out whether a blond foreigner had been in the district: a man whose name may have been Hohl, who might have owned a Belgian-made revolver called the American Bullock, and who had an English vocabulary of at least twelve words, sufficient for him to have been able to utter three sentences—"Say a word and I shoot," "I will not shoot," and "Now I have got you."

CHAPTER EIGHT

AFTER THE FACT

IN 1969, LORD BEECHING, A STEAMROLLER OF A MAN who was obsessed with the silly belief that work study measurements were the be-all and end-all of "efficiency improvement," recommended that assizes and quarter sessions should be done away with; the government of the day, instead of asking some pretty obvious questions about the way lawyers were elongating proceedings and turning Legal Aid into a gold mine, and about the full-time salaries paid to certain judges who only worked part-time hours, accepted milord's people-ignoring proposals, and the sixty-one assize towns had their courts either turned over to lay magistrates or changed to all-the-year-round Crown courts.

Chester was among the latter. Oldham was promoted: the theater-like room in the town hall where Cornelius Howard appeared after his arrest by Constable Ernest Schofield became a Crown court. The magistrates' court adjoining the police station at Dukinfield did not have its status altered; it looks much the same today as it did when the Gorse Hall case was the talk of the town, the country.

Strangeways Prison, built in 1868, is still going strong, but the jail at Knutsford was pulled down in 1934. It ceased to be a county jail shortly before World War I, but was used during the war for the incarceration of conscientious objectors and German prisoners; in 1919, the Reverend P. B. "Tubby" Clayton, founder of the Toc H movement, opened the jail as a hostel for men from the armed forces who were training for ordination as clergy of the Church of England, and it was used for this purpose for three years.

Considering the dire things that have happened in other places in the way of neon lights, high-rise buildings, and look-alike shopping precincts, Stalybridge hasn't suffered too badly. One doesn't need much imagination to conjure up in one's mind the town as it was in 1909.

As the Liberal party declined, so did the Liberal Club in Albert Square, and it was eventually demolished. If there are any Oddfellows left in Stalybridge, they must meet in hired premises, for the hall where Marion Lindley panted out the news that her uncle was being murdered became a bingo club and then, unregrettably, was destroyed by fire. During the 1960s, "Ready-Money Jack" Leech's houses for his workers were pulled down before they fell down; part of the land is now occupied by a private housing development, the rest by blocks of flats erected by the council.

Though the Newmarket pub has not been mentioned in the story of the stabbing of George Harry Storrs, and was demolished years ago, the plaque on the building that fills its site in Corporation Street is worth a reference. The plaque relates that Jack Judge, a music-hall "artiste" appearing at the local theater at the start of 1912, part of a bill that was topped by Berzac's Performing Seals, wrote the words and hummed the melody of "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" at the Newmarket. According to Judge's own account of the song's gestation, when he and some friends were coming out of a club late on the night of 30 January, he made a five-shillings bet with them that he would compose a song and perform it the following evening. On the way to his digs, he overheard a man asking for directions—and the reply, "It's a long way to" wherever the place was. Almost at once, he added "Tipperary" to the depressing response, and next morning thought up a verse and a chorus, together with a tune, before going to the Newmarket to write down and polish up the lyric. He got the conductor of the theater orchestra to transcribe the tune, arranged a quick band-call, sang the song on stage that evening, and collected his five shillings. "Tipperary" was an immediate success; by the end of the week, the whole company was joining in with Judge—even the seals, who flapped their flippers in approximate time to the music. Jack Judge

sang the song in other towns; it was published by Feldman's; it became the signature tune of the British Tommies during World War I.

Coming back to places associated with the Gorse Hall case, the Astley Arms, which was the main setting for Mark Wilde's alibi for the night of the window-breaking incident, is still to be found facing Robinson Street, still doing a roaring trade in the evenings. Fern Bank remains—so solidly built by William Storrs that there seems no reason why it should not exist until the nuclear Armageddon; emphasizing its substantiality, thoroughfares constructed round about the house in the mid-1960s are called Fern Bank this, Fern Bank that. Holme Lea, the residence of Robert Innes and the workplace of Maria Hohl, is now called Tall Turrets; the building is a home for deprived children, and human beings described as "geriatrics" are cared for in a structure erected in the garden.

The stables for Gorse Hall were demolished in the 1940s. People lived at Old Gorse Hall until 1957, but the ancient house was pulled down in the following year; some of the ruins remain. In 1973, the estate was bought by the Borough of Dukinfield, who, after renaming it Gorse Hall Park, opened it to the public as "a semi-wild area rather than a formal town park." Some effort was made to introduce foreign plants, but few of them survived the competition from the native ones. Horticultural optimists say that the gorse which gave the place its name is returning. The winding drive is still flanked by dusty-leaved rhododendrons.

There were twenty-three cotton mills in Stalybridge in 1909. Half a dozen have been demolished (including "Ready-Money Jack" Leech's Grosvenor Mill, the site of which is now occupied by the new buildings of the Castle Hall School, which numbers Cornelius Howard among its alumni); five are derelict; and most of the rest have been converted by firms that have little or nothing to do with textiles—for instance, one company produces thermoplastics, another makes "swivel-walkers" for paraplegics, and a third mixes pigments for paints. Only four businesses are in the textile industry, and two of these are small concerns, sharing buildings with other companies. The Aqueduct Mill, which has been taken

over by a firm of carpet-yarn spinners, is one of just two mills still used wholly for the manufacture of textiles.

As has been mentioned, soon after the murder of her husband, Maggie Storrs moved to Harrogate, then, a few months later, to a house that she called Fairhaven at Kents Bank, just across the bay from the village of Silverdale, her birthplace; but for an intervening plantation of conifers on the Silverdale side, the two places would be in sight of each other; twice a day, when the tide is out, it is possible to take a shortcut across the sands between the villages.

Maggie Storrs lived a quiet life at Kents Bank, only leaving Fairhaven to attend church services, or to visit the two or three friends she acquired in the district, or to take tea in one of the several eating-houses on the promenade of the nearby town of Grange-over-Sands, or, very occasionally, to drive around the Kent estuary to Silverdale. Her coachman, Fred Booker, must have had to invent tasks for himself; perhaps he sometimes helped another local man, George Duckworth, tend the hillside garden or nurture the exotic plants in the conservatory at the front of the house.

Only a year or so after moving to Kents Bank, she was left on her own at Fairhaven. During the months in Harrogate, Marion Lindley had met a doctor, George Henry Vane Appleby (he hyphenated the Vane and the Appleby, but this was just vanity). A native of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he had his first practice, he was a frequent visitor to the spa town, for he was preparing to open a surgery in the then-exclusive Royal Parade. He was, by all accounts, a brilliant doctor, and had lectured and written papers and a book on public health. He had two brothers: Ernest, also a doctor, had married an heiress; Alfred, a lawyer (later knighted for services to the Conservative party), had also married an heiress. George courted Marion, perhaps unmindful of the fact that she, too, would sooner or later be an heiress, and in 1911 they were married. They set up house in Royal Parade, Harrogate, and a couple of years later Marion gave birth to a son, John Trevor Middleton (the family name again) Appleby, to whom Maggie Storrs was godmother.

On 21 March 1926, Maggie died at Fairhaven after a short

illness. She left £22,223 (approximately £400,000 in terms of present-day purchasing power). Small legacies went to friends and servants: Eliza Cooper, who was still Maggie's housemaid, received £100 and an annuity of twenty shillings a week; Mary Evans, though no longer her cook, got £50. A quite complicated part of the will dealt with what was to happen if Marion predeceased her; of the dozen or so bequests in that event, Maggie, with no children of her own, said that £200 should go to Dr. Barnardo's orphanage.

But Marion Appleby was alive and well. The bulk of the estate went to her, making her very affluent indeed.

Three years later, her husband decided to forsake Harrogate and try his luck in London. The family moved to Clifton Court, a block of flats near Lord's cricket ground in St. John's Wood. Dr. Appleby was appointed physician to the servants of the Duke and Duchess of York at their home at 145 Piccadilly; after visits to the royal residence, he often spoke of seeing the young princesses, Elizabeth (now Queen of England) and Margaret, running about the house.

Like his brother Ernest, George Appleby was a compulsive gambler. He invested heavily on the Stock Exchange; he put up money for business ventures. Few of the tips he heard proved reliable; few of the innovative products got as far as being launched. Perhaps to take his mind off his financial worries, he began to tipple, and in no time at all he was drinking excessively. He lost his royal appointment, and his general practice dwindled. So did the money his wife had been left.

Though declared bankrupt, he kept his son John at one of the better—and, of course, more expensive—public schools. After leaving school, John Appleby had one job after another in quick succession. He took after his father in being fond of fashionable clothes, gourmet food, and vintage wine, and in the mid-1930s he drifted into the life of a "Mayfair playboy"; he boasted of being a chum of the members of one of the gangs of "young men about town" who stole jewelry for "kicks" and to swell their allowances from rich and indulgent parents. But at the start of World War II, John Appleby enlisted in the army and was commissioned. It would appear

that service discipline swept away much of his fecklessness; he was reckoned a good officer. His mother believed that he had at last become the sort of son she had wished for. In the summer of 1944, he was killed when leading his platoon onto a beach in Normandy.

One of Marion Appleby's nephews remembers that "though she had a trying time with her husband, she was tremendous fun to be with; she was a scatter-brain, always saying scatty, inconsequential things." In the early 1950s, when she was nearing seventy, she took a job for the first time in her life, an undemanding clerical post in the Civil Service. She died from pneumonia and old age in Paddington General Hospital on 26 October 1960.

There was slightly more than £2,000 left from her inheritance. George Appleby died before probate of the will, so the estate went to her two nephews, sons of her husband's brothers. They had high hopes that the forty-four acres of land overlapping the boundary between Stalybridge and Dukinfield, still known as the Gorse Hall estate though the house had been pulled down fifty years before, could be sold for development; but the land had been designated "green belt," meaning that nothing could be built on it, so in 1973 it was sold to the Borough of Dukinfield for the paltry sum of £5,000. Another plot of land in Stalybridge, bought by George Harry Storrs a year or so before he was murdered, still awaits a purchaser.

Of course, Fairhaven, Maggie Storrs's house at Kents Banks, was sold after her death. It has since been split into flats, and the stables at the back have been converted into garages. By an odd coincidence, just a few doors away is a house called Holme Lea.

Across the bay, in Silverdale, the name of Middleton has virtually disappeared. Ask about the history of the village, and you will probably be directed to the members of the three families—the Boltons, the Burrows, and the Bisbrowns—that have lived there for hundreds of years. Or, unless you make it plain that you have not wandered off the beaten Haworth tracks, you may be told to look at Cove House, once the home of the Reverend William Carus Wilson ("Dr. Brocklehurst" in

Jane Eyre), where Charlotte and Emily Brontë stayed for a while, and to visit Gibraltar, at the edge of the village, where Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte's biographer, used to sit to watch the sun setting over the bay. Or if you are suspected of being American, you will be advised to see Warton, which has Washington-family associations that are considered strong enough to warrant the flying of the Stars and Stripes from the church each Independence Day.

Bank House Farm, where Maggie Storrs was born and where she and George Harry had their wedding breakfast, is in the center of Silverdale, at the foot of a short lane beside the village hall; the present tenant specializes in the breeding of Ayrshire cattle, but the farmyard is a rural orchestra pit, with dozens of different animals—including a turquoise-feathered peacock—continually tuning up. Another coincidence: on the tree-smothered slopes just to the east of Silverdale is a straggle of three hamlets, one called Yealand Conyers, another Yealand Redmayne, and the third, so small that it is ignored by most cartographers, Yealand *Storrs.*

James Storrs achieved his two great ambitions—one of them by a short head from death. In 1917 he was elected president of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers, and in November 1923 he became mayor of Stalybridge for a two-year term, which he completed a few months before he died at Fern Bank.

Two of James's children inherited his interest in civic affairs. William Hargrave, his eldest son (who ran the family firm after George Harry's death—later assisted by James's youngest son by his first marriage, Thomas, who continued with the company until it ceased business in 1960), became a justice of the peace. He married Gertrude Pratt, the extremely wealthy daughter of the man who marketed "Compo," one of the first washing powders to be sold in England, and in the early 1930s bought a mansion, Bryn Eithin, in the Welsh seaside town of Colwyn Bay. In 1941, he was elected high sheriff of his adopted county of Denbighshire.

James's eldest daughter, Alice, was also appointed a justice of the peace. She became mayoress of Dukinfield when her husband—the son of William Underwood, the magistrate

who tried both Cornelius Howard and Mark Wilde—was elected mayor in the 1920s.

(The Underwoods' son Stuart provides a link between the Gorse Hall case and the so-called Moors murders, the last of which was committed at the home of the murderers, Brady and Hindley, on the Hattersley overspill estate at Hyde, in 1965. Stuart Underwood, senior resident engineer to Manchester Corporation, was responsible for the construction of the estate; the main Underwood Road—and the Underwood Court block of flats, home of the man who was "invited" to the last murder and who afterward informed the police of what he had seen—was named after Stuart Underwood.)

Thomas Storrs's wife Marjorie, another JP, was mayor of Stalybridge in 1957.

James's other children had mixed fortunes. Two sons have not been mentioned so far. Herbert, the second eldest, became a director of a cotton mill; James Junior, the second youngest, graduated in law at Clare College, Cambridge, but was killed in action during World War I.

Margaret, the youngest daughter, and her husband, Herbert Rhodes, seemed most assured of happiness. Rhodes, who was very well off, the owner of three mills in Glossop, was a great sportsman: he had his own cricket eleven, formed the Stalybridge Celtic Football Club, and owned a horse called Great Surprise that won several races. But Margaret died in childbirth, and Herbert became almost penniless through investing the bulk of his fortune in the Moscow State Railway just before the Bolshevik Revolution.

Philip Beeley Storrs, James's only child by his second marriage, was considered "highly neurotic" by his stepbrothers and sisters—a condition that may have been exacerbated by his stay at the Arnold House preparatory school near Colwyn Bay (where, in 1925, Evelyn Waugh was a master; the school, under the alias of "Llanabba Castle," is the setting of the opening chapters of Waugh's first novel, *Decline and Fall*; it was at Arnold House that Waugh encountered the man—described in his diary as "monotonously pederastic"—who was the model for "Captain Grimes"). One thing that struck everybody who corresponded with Philip Beeley Storrs was his religious way with dates, which caused some confusion to

people who just about knew the difference between Lent and Michaelmas: his letters were dated in accordance with the religious calendar—for instance, "Thank you for yours of the First Friday after Septuagesima, Year of Our Lord such-and-such." He was admitted a solicitor in 1931, but practiced on his own in Colwyn Bay for only five years of our Lord before being struck off the Roll for financial misconduct.

As for lawyers who played a part in the Gorse Hall case, Mr. Justice Pickford, who presided at the trial of Cornelius Howard, ascended to the pinnacle of his profession. He was a lord justice of appeal from 1914 until 1918, in which year he was created Baron Sterndale and appointed president of the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division. From 1919 until his death in 1923, he was Master of the Rolls (head of the Civil Division of the Supreme Court).

Mr. Justice Channell, the judge who was so helpful to the police when Mark Wilde was convicted of the attempted murder in Early Bank Road, retired from the bench in 1914. No doubt his nautical experience came in handy between 1916 and 1921, when he was a member of the judicial committee in prize-court appeals. In 1921, at the age of eighty-three, he returned to the bench for a few weeks in response to an appeal to retired judges to help in disposing of arrears in the King's Bench Division. Six years later, he sat in the Privy Council to hear the last prize-appeal arising out of World War I. He died in the following year, 1927, just a few weeks short of his ninetieth birthday.

Like Channell, Mr. Justice Horridge was convinced that the intellectual power of judges did not diminish with age; in 1935, speaking before a royal commission, he opposed the notion of introducing a retiring age—and, suiting his actions to his words, remained on the the bench until 1937, a year before his death at the age of eighty. Apart from the trial of Mark Wilde, his most important case was the trial of Sir Roger Casement for treason in 1916, when he sat with two other judges. Right to the end, he caused alarm to barristers and witnesses who mistook his *rictus sardonicus* for a grin of appreciation, and consternation to court administrators by his insistence on noting every word of the evidence.

Francis Williams, leading Crown counsel at both the Gorse

Hall trials, died in 1914. Ellis Ellis-Griffith, Williams's junior on both occasions, made something of a name for himself in politics, being undersecretary of state at the Home Department from 1912 until 1915; he was knighted in 1918, and, after losing his Anglesey seat in that year and winning the Carmarthen constituency for the Liberals in 1923, died at the end of 1926. Nothing can be said about Trevor Lloyd, leading defense counsel at the trial of Cornelius Howard, who was never again involved in a sensational case. His junior, Austin Lloyd Jones, was awarded the Military Cross and twice mentioned in dispatches during his service with the Royal Field Artillery in World War I; he was knighted in 1945, and served as a High Court judge between 1948 and 1961, and then enjoyed six years of retirement. Edward Theophilus Nelson, the black barrister who defended Cornelius Howard in the police court and Mark Wilde at both the committal proceedings and the trial, continued to practice from chambers in King Street, Manchester, until his death in 1940, but it appears that he was never again the subject of headlines in national papers; without much doubt, if he had been born fifty years later, he would have become either a leader of the militants in his native country or a spokesman for the civil rights movement in the United Kingdom.

Robert Innes gave up his solicitor's practice in 1922, when he was sixty-three, and became the most active of the local justices of the peace. He died in 1940. One of his daughters still lives in Stalybridge, but has no memories of the Swiss governess, Maria Hohl. In 1928, Ambrose Rodocanachi, one of the two doctors called to Gorse Hall on the night of the murder, moved from Grosvenor Street to a house called Aingarth, just two doors away from Holme Lea; one wonders whether the doctor and the solicitor ever chatted about their respective roles in the case. Rodocanachi, as well as carrying on a general practice, was a surgeon at the infirmary for thirty-three years, and was its vice-president from 1931 until his death in 1942. Dr. Thomas Williams, who played a more important part in the case than did Rodocanachi, continued to diagnose and prescribe until the early years of World War II. Both doctors are remembered with affection and gratitude by many of the older people of Stalybridge.

Just as he had left the Stalybridge police force to its own devices during the Boer War, Captain John Bates went off to fight with the Cheshire Regiment in 1915; he came back two years later and then seems to have given his full-time attention to the force until he retired on pension in 1924. Colonel Hamersley retired as chief constable of Cheshire a month before the trial of Mark Wilde; in 1911, by which time he had moved to Devon, he was awarded the King's Police Medal for his services to the constabulary. He died at the age of eighty-six in 1928. A year before, William Leah (for whom I have much respect, though he must have been rather trying to work under) had retired after forty-six years' service. During World War I, when Hamersley's successor was in the army, Leah had commanded the force. Unlike Hamersley, who had to wait until he retired before he was awarded the King's Police Medal, Leah received it in 1912 (the first Cheshire "ranker" to be thus honored); the following year, he received the Royal Victorian Order.

There are several tragic figures in the Gorse Hall case, but it seems to me that the most tragic of all is William Pierce. Am I alone in seeing a connection between him and Inspector Jonathan Whicher ("Whichem" in Charles Dickens's *Household Words* and "Sergeant Cuff" in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*), whose career was virtually ruined by the Constance Kent case? William Pierce was a brilliant detective, and an extraordinarily hardworking one. It strikes me that, within the investigative constraints of 1910, he did all the right things in seeking to prove that Mark Wilde was the murderer of George Harry Storrs. But ever after he was known, though not to his face, as "the detective who arrested the wrong man." There is no indication whether the failure preyed on his mind, undermining his talents and debilitating his energy, or whether it affected his superiors' opinion of him: one or the other, it seems. Pierce—who before the trial of Mark Wilde, should have been seen as a probable successor to William Leah—made no further progress in the Cheshire Constabulary.

What became of Cornelius Howard and Mark Wilde?

I wish I knew.

A number of people have told me that Howard emigrated

(North America is most frequently mentioned), but I have been unable to confirm this. One of Mark Wilde's sisters still lives in Stalybridge, but she refuses to talk about him. I received information—reliable, it seemed—that, some time in the 1950s, he was knocked down and killed by a haulage-lorry when he was pushing a rag-and-bone barrow through the Audenshaw district of Manchester; but a search of twenty years' of death records failed to reveal a Mark Wilde of about the right age. A recurring story is that, after the trial, a group of Stalybridge businessmen clubbed together to pay for his passage to Australia (they feared that he was "Wilde by name and wild by nature" and might take his acquittal as meaning that he could murder again and get away with it); it is said that he accepted the offer, but returned to England with the Anzac forces at the start of World War I. I have also been told that he died, not in England or Australia, but somewhere in Africa.

Yes, even now there is plenty of talk in Stalybridge about the Gorse Hall case and the people involved in it. (Mr. and Mrs. James Bolton, now both dead, are still referred to as "that nice couple who came close to being cut into strips upt' wood"; and it is hard *not* to hear that, shortly before the murder, George Harry Storrs caught Mark Wilde trespassing on his land and "thrashed him within an inch of his life.")

And there are, needless to say, any number of ghost stories. Ronnie Cook, a down-to-earth sort of man, ran a pig farm on the Gorse Hall estate until it was bought by the Dukinfield council. One day while he was milking his goat, he observed a man walking toward him; the man was laughing uproariously but silently. Cook's dog ran to greet the man—who disappeared into thin air. The dog "went mad," barking furiously and running around in circles, and then dashed off, not to return until three hours later. Quite a few people say that when they have been strolling in the park, as it is now, at twilight, they have heard the sound of horses ("a phantom coach") or of chains being rattled. Five or six years ago the local paper reported that a woman walking in the park was approached by a tall man wearing a top hat and a cloak; though she thought his garb oddly anachronistic, she said hello—whereupon the man faded away; not unnaturally,

though the ground was damp, the woman fainted. In 1979, a poltergeist turned up in one of the new houses on the site of "Ready-Money Jack" Leech's estate; as well as being vandalistic, it made nonsense of the central heating, causing certain rooms to be so cold that the residents just couldn't stop shivering; I am pleased to say that it moved out after the local vicar had done the next best thing to an official exorcism.

As we know, songs were sung about the stabbing of George Harry Storrs when it was news. Nowadays, it is remembered in "The Ballad of Gorse Hall," composed by Graham Whitehead and sung by a folk group that performs in and around Stalybridge:

> On November the first, the year nineteen-o-nine,
> I was still a young lad then and serving my time,
> When I heard the bell ringing, around about nine,
> From the house on the hill, Gorse Hall.
>
> Mr. George Harry Storrs, a man of renown,
> And highly respected in Stalybridge town,
> From fifteen knife wounds had been cruelly brought down
> In the house on the hill, Gorse Hall.
>
> Captain Bates and his men to the murder scene went,
> And the bloodhounds were quickly put on to the scent,
> But no one could find where the murderer went
> From the house on the hill, Gorse Hall.
>
> For many days after, there was not a trace,
> Though four people bore witness to seeing his face:
> The servants, Mrs Storrs and Miss Lindley, the niece—
> They were present that night at Gorse Hall.
>
> And then a warrant went out to arrest
> Cornelius Howard of no fixed address:
> Some sort of a relative, nevertheless,
> Of the man who was killed Gorse Hall.
>
> All of the witnesses said it was him,
> And the stories he gave the police were so slim,
> That they were quite sure of convicting him
> Of the murder that night at Gorse Hall.
>
> Until from Huddersfield town they came—
> Two men who said Howard was with them that day:
> From the Ring o' Bells Tavern he'd not been away,

And could not have been at Gorse Hall.

For just twenty minutes the jury was out;
Not guilty, they found him to great cheers and shouts.
Once more the police force did set about
To capture the man from Gorse Hall.

Next they arrested a man named Mark Wilde,
Likewise acquitted after his trial—
Though once more the witnesses said he'd the style
Of the man who was there at Gorse Hall.

The only comfort the noose ever gave
Was to Worrall, the coachman, who took his own life:
Not proving his guilt but only his grief
At his master's cruel death in Gorse Hall.

A triumphant postscript:

The Gorse Hall bell has been found!

Just yesterday, I learned that the bell, silent since the night of Monday, 1 November 1909, hangs decoratively in a belfry on the roof of Bryn Eithin, the house in Colwyn Bay where George Harry Storrs's favorite nephew once lived.

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[Continued from front flap] persons who came to his aid that he could have identified his assailant. Jonathan Goodman, through a painstaking reconstruction and analysis of the case almost three-quarters of a century after the event, has come up with strong evidence regarding the motive for the crime and the identity of the murderer.

The general editor of the Celebrated Trials Series, a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and a member of the British Academy of Forensic Sciences, the Medico-Legal Society, and Our Society, Jonathan Goodman is the author of a number of previous books that include *The Killing of Julia Wallace* and *The Burning of Evelyn Foster.*

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